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(54) **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR APPLYING AN ELASTIC MATERIAL TO A MOVING SUBSTRATE IN A CURVED PATH**

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- (*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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CPC **A61F 13/15585**; **A61F 13/15593**; **A61F 2013/1591**; **B05C 5/025**

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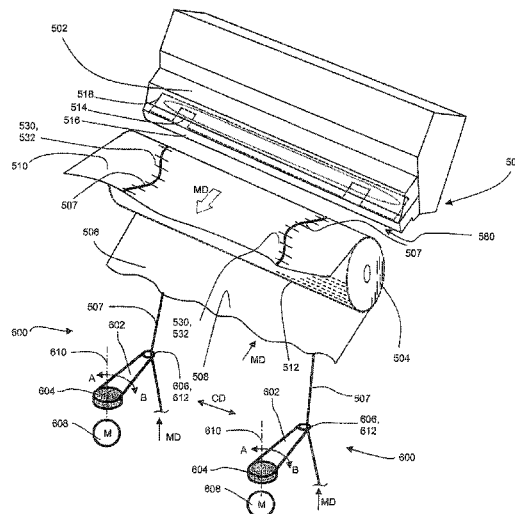
See application file for complete search history.

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ABSTRACT

Aspects of the methods and apparatuses relate to making elastic laminates, and more particularly, methods and apparatuses for applying elastic material in a curved path onto an advancing substrate. The elastic material may be in various forms, such as for example, elastic strands and/or ribbons. Apparatuses and methods disclosed herein may also provide for the application of viscous fluids, such as adhesives, in pre-determined patterns to the elastic material while being positioned on an advancing substrate.

16 Claims, 25 Drawing Sheets



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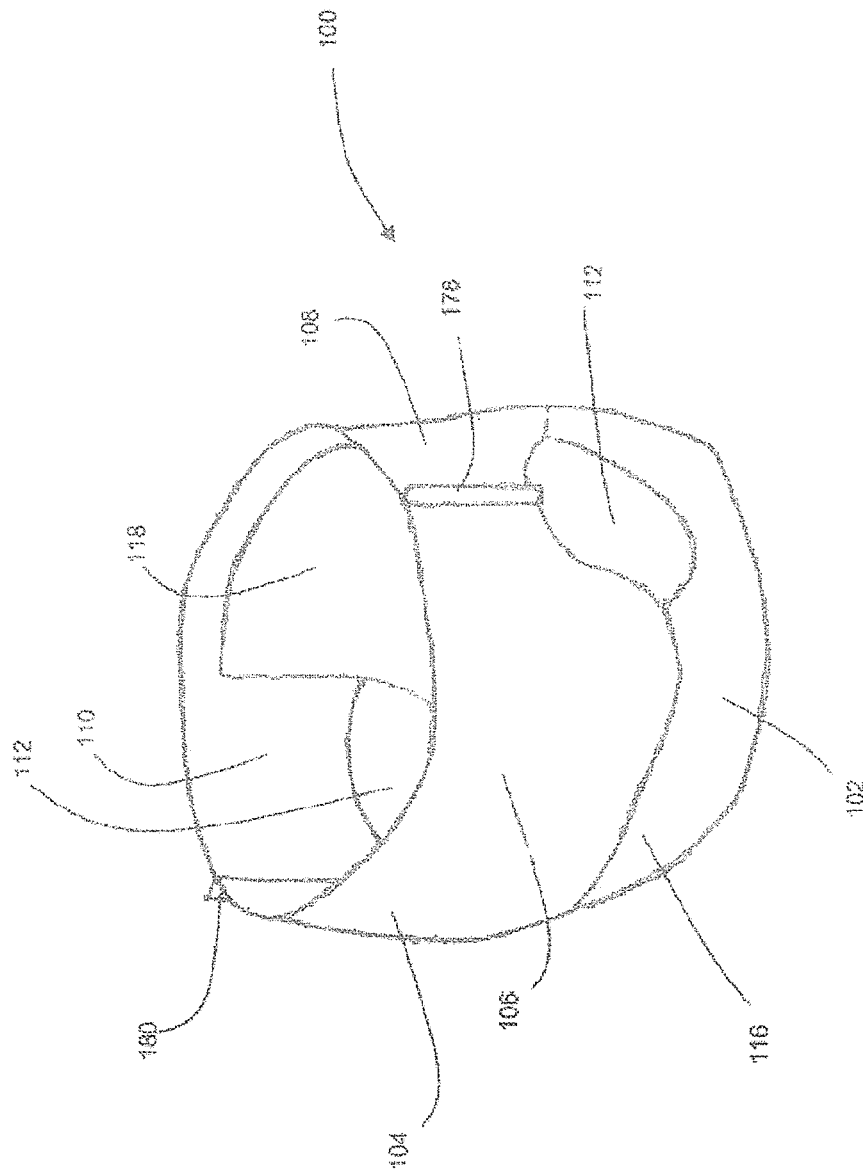
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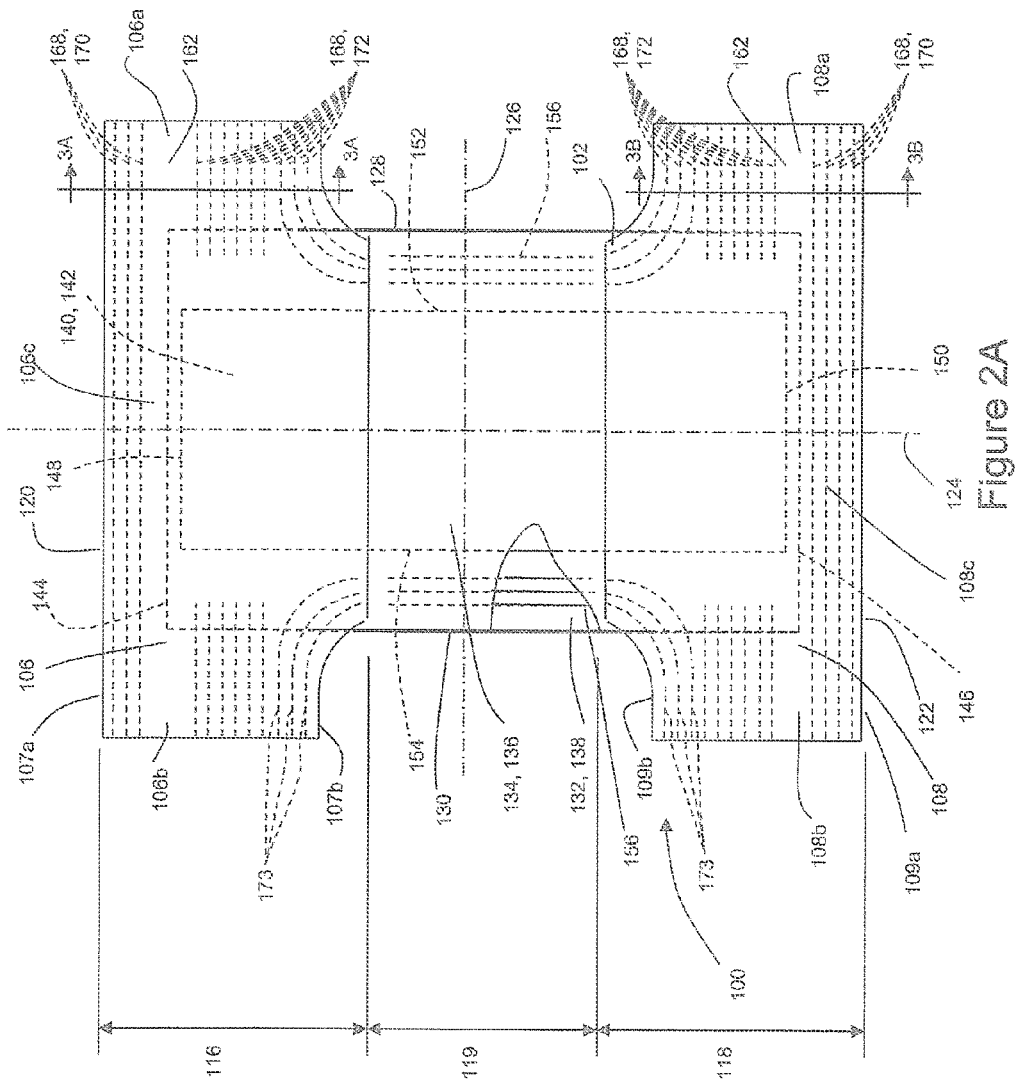
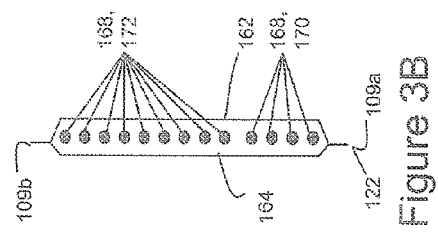
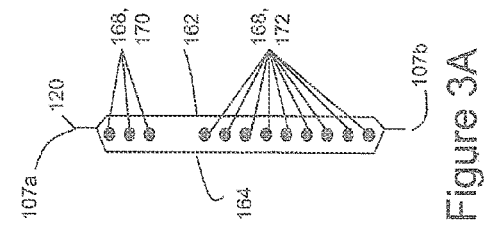
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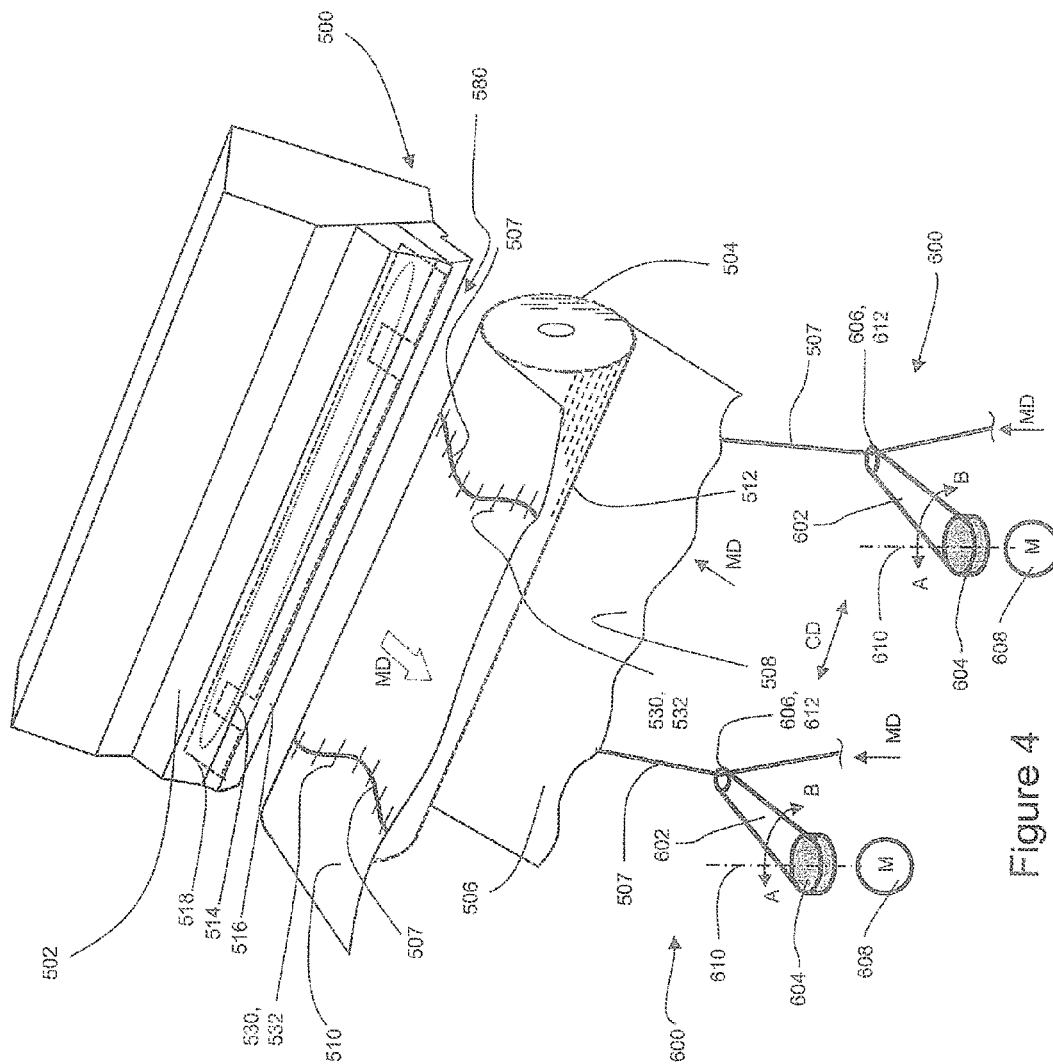


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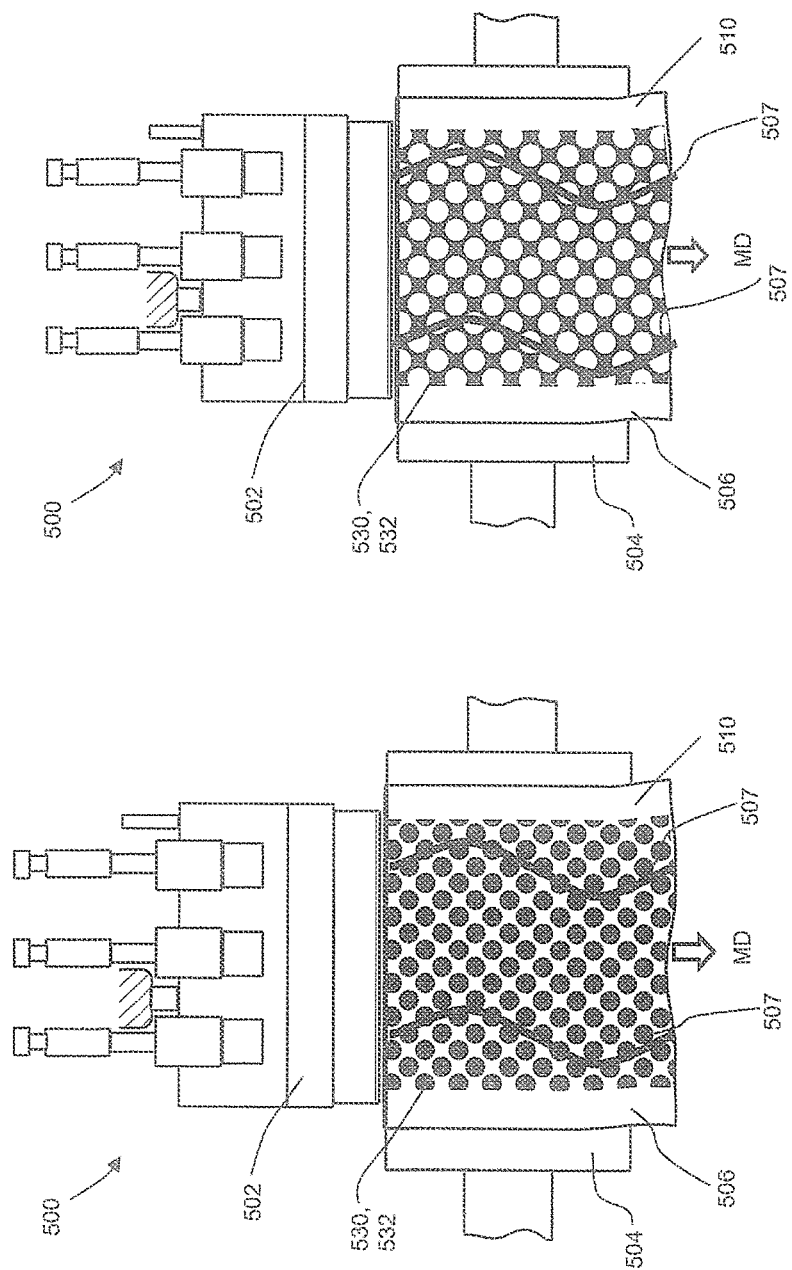


Figure 4B

Figure 4A

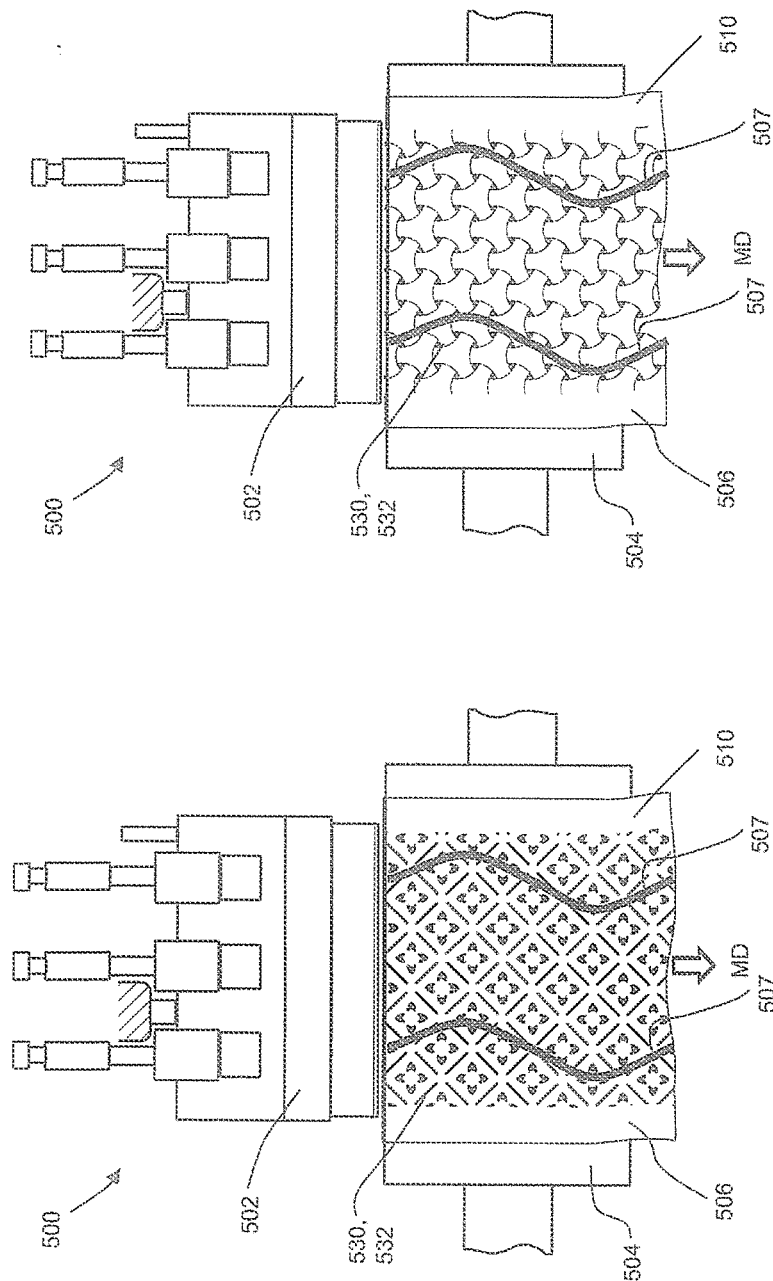


Figure 4D

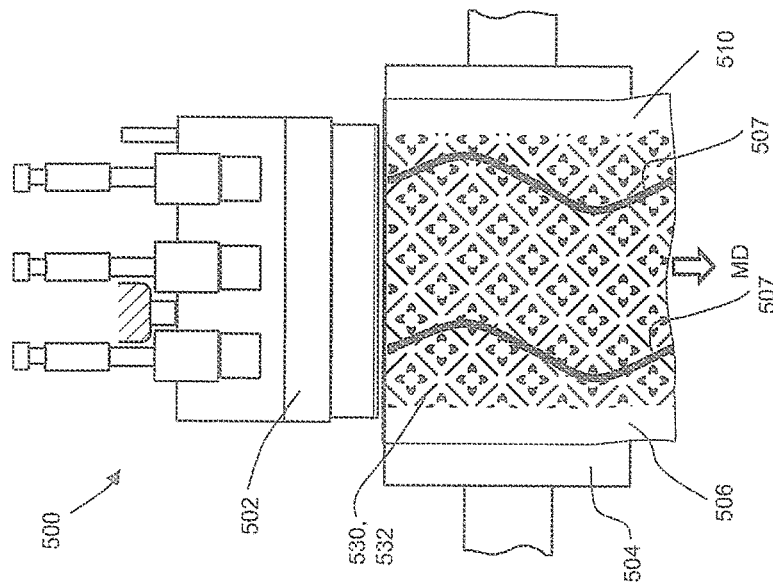


Figure 4C

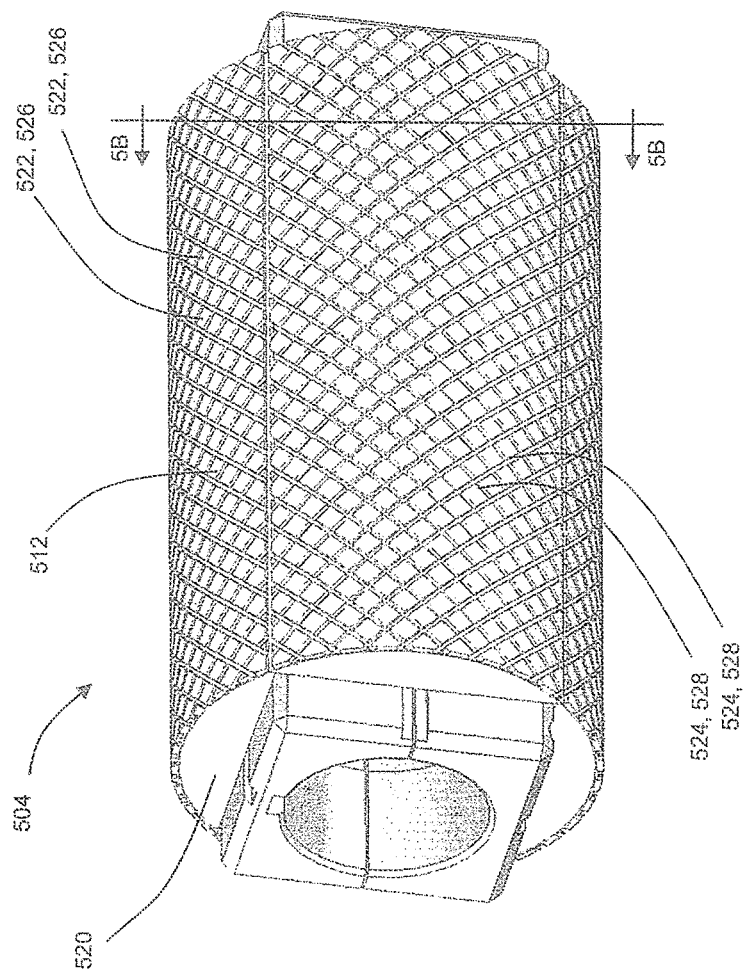


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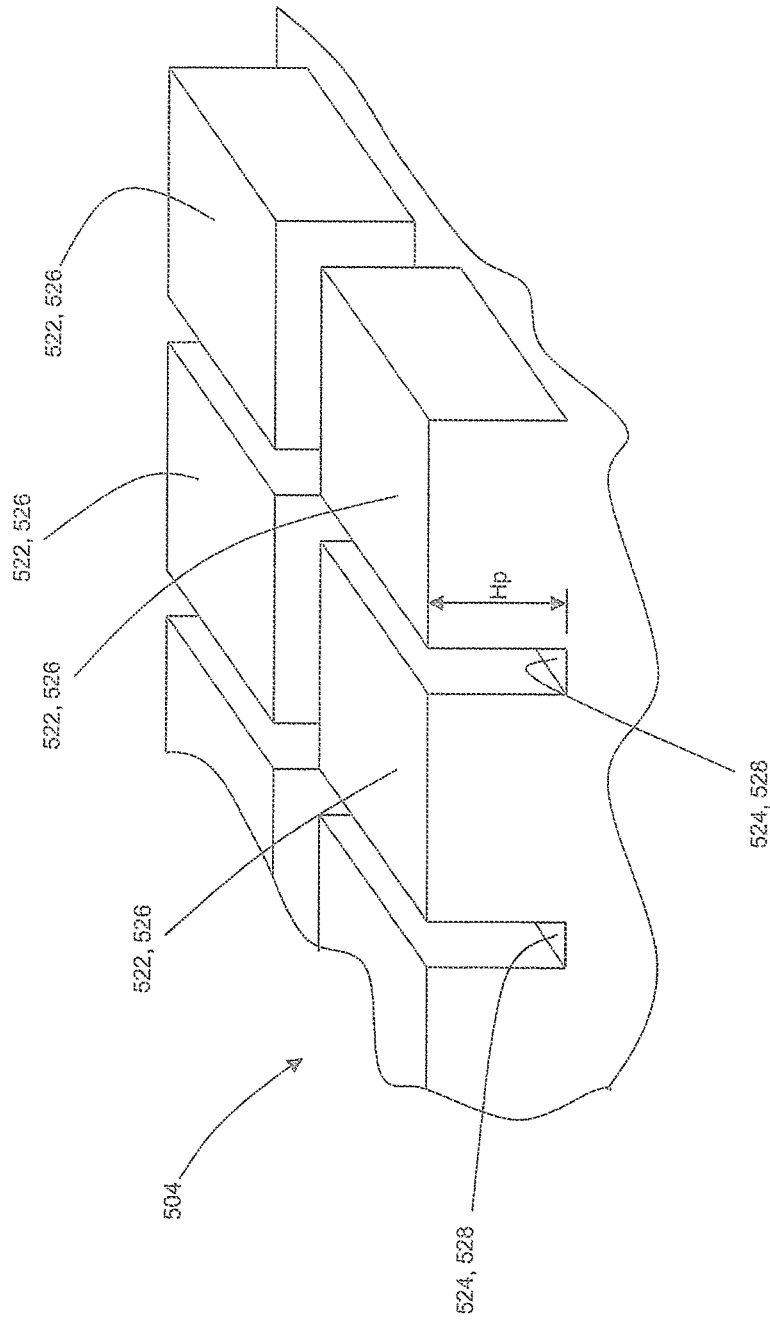


Figure 5B

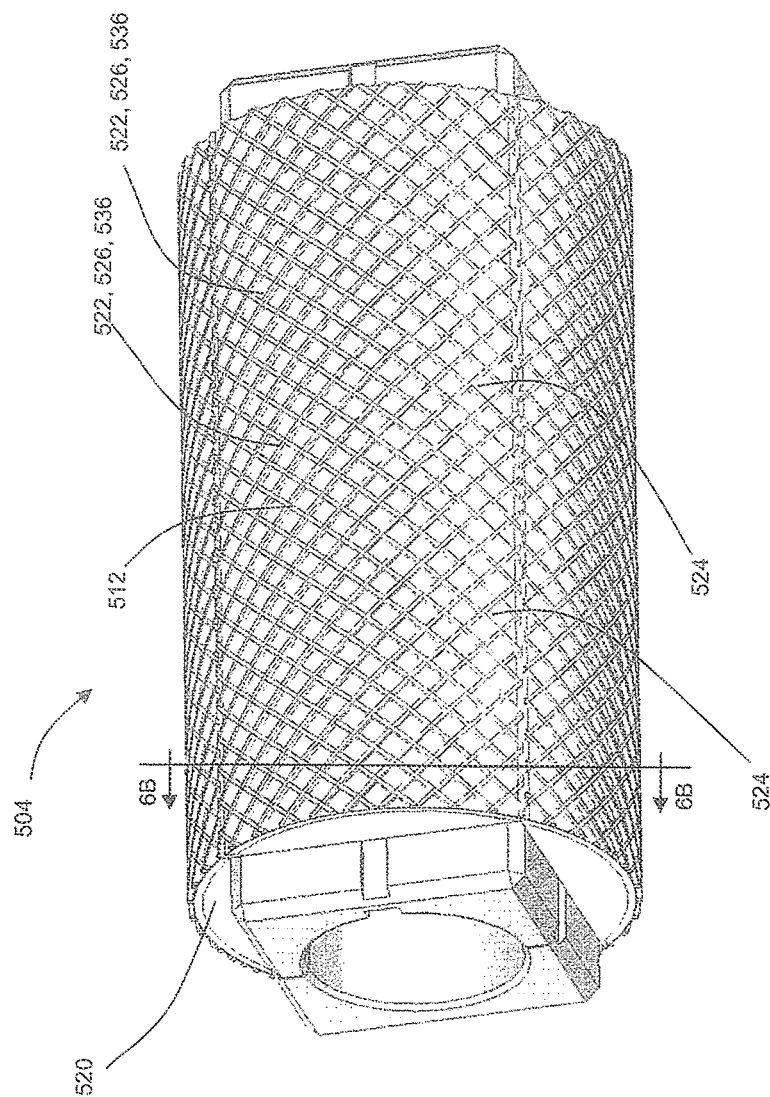


Figure 6A

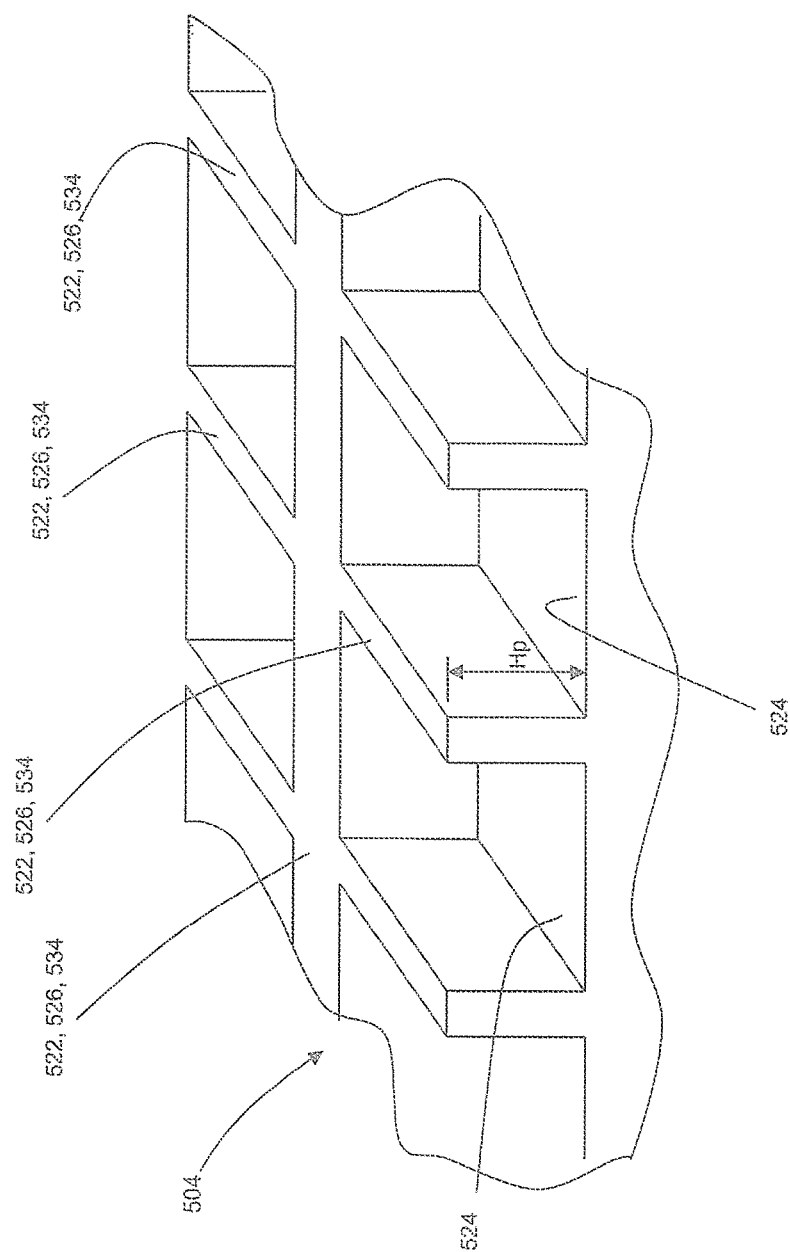


Figure 6B

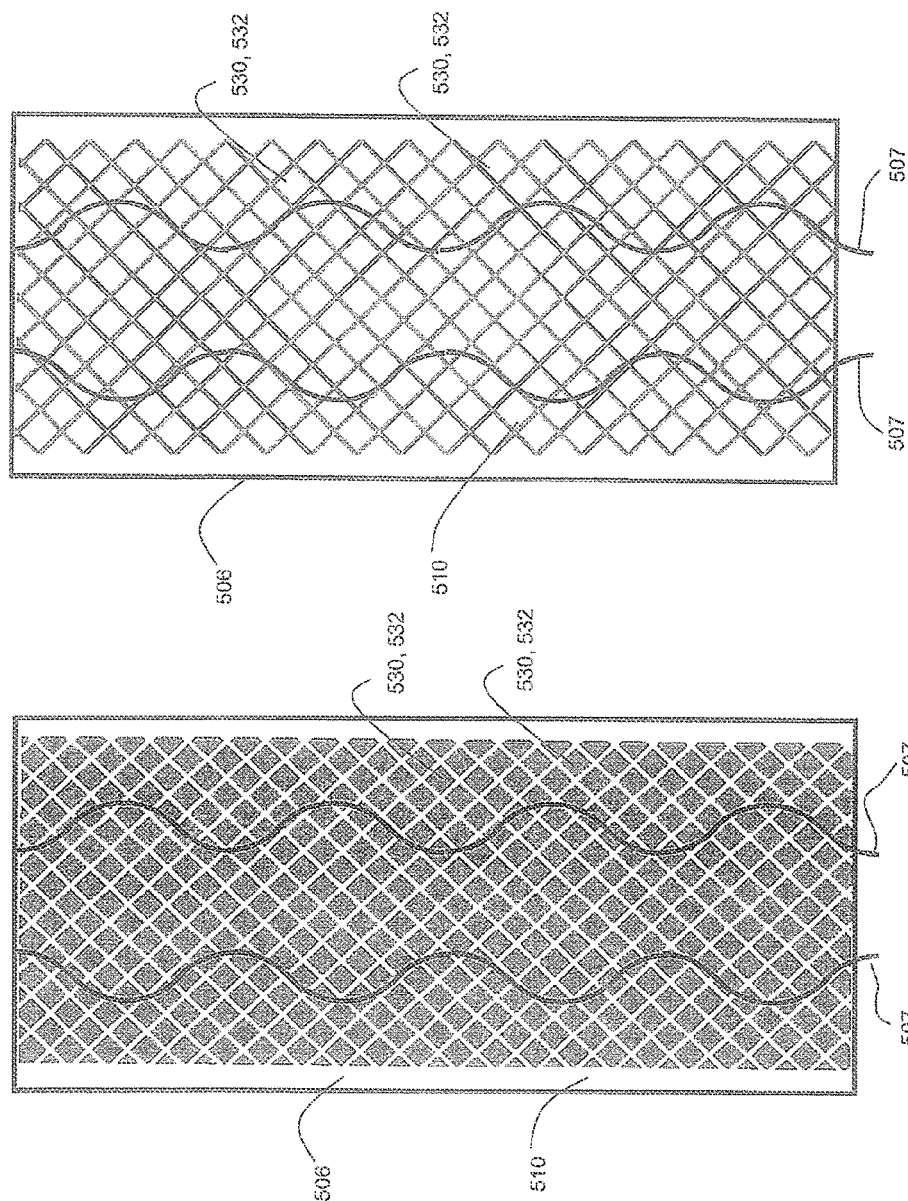


Figure 6C

Figure 5C

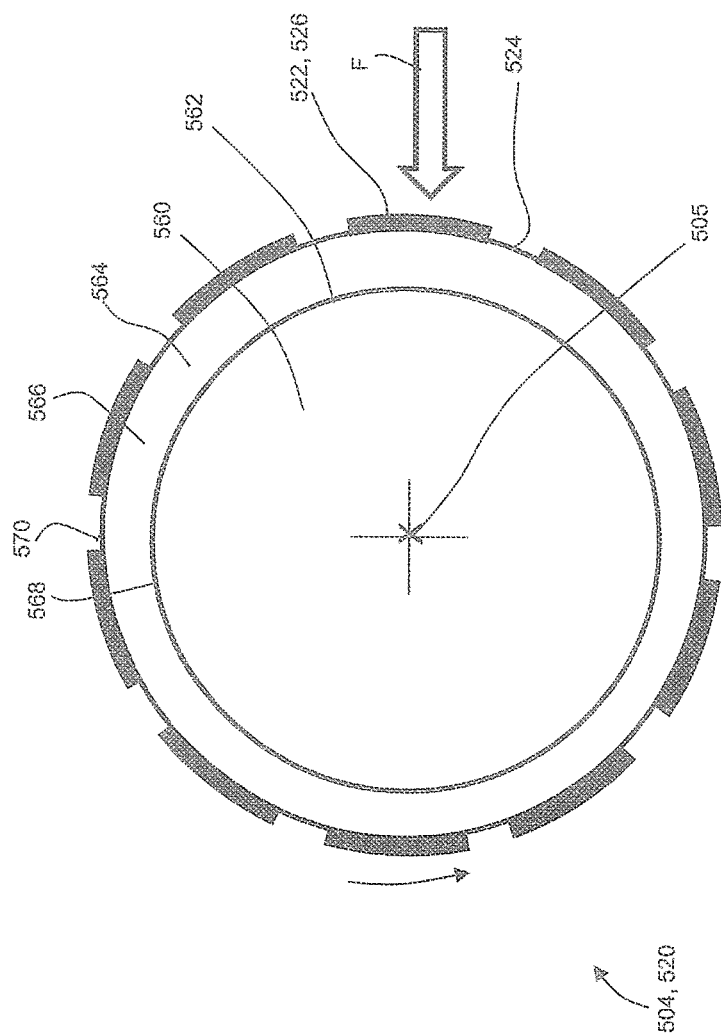


Figure 7

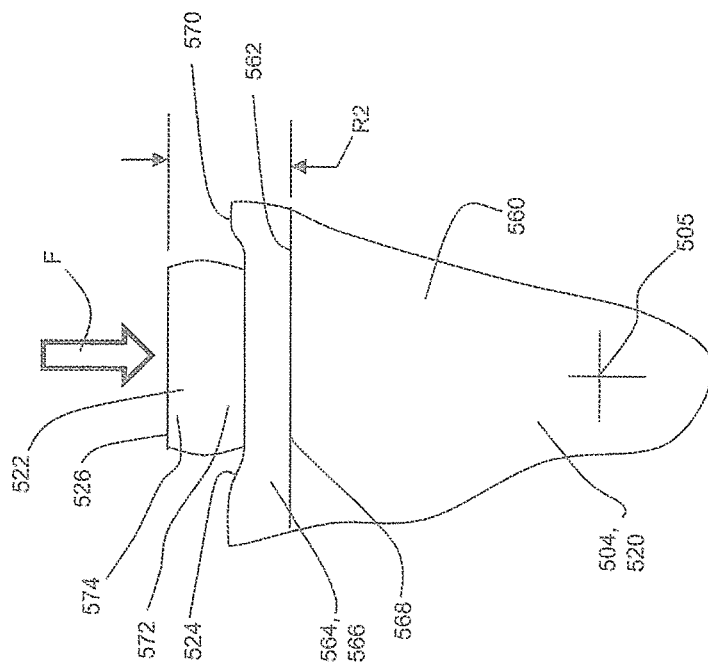


Figure 7A2

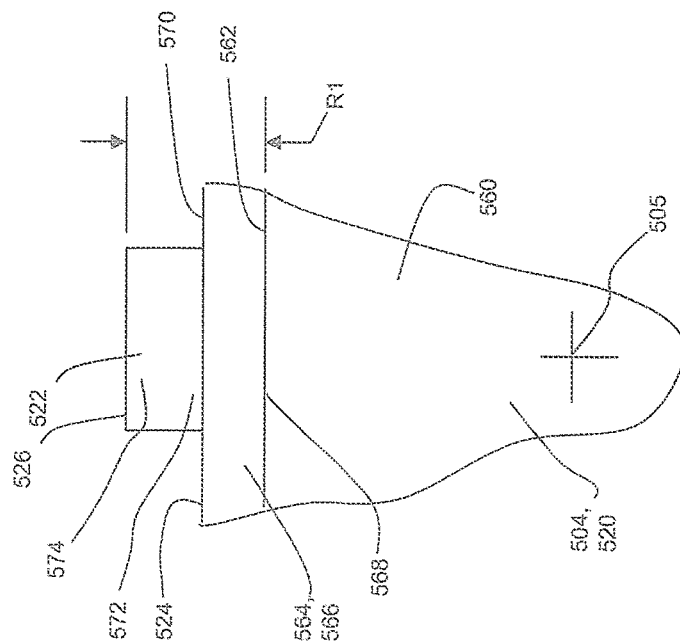


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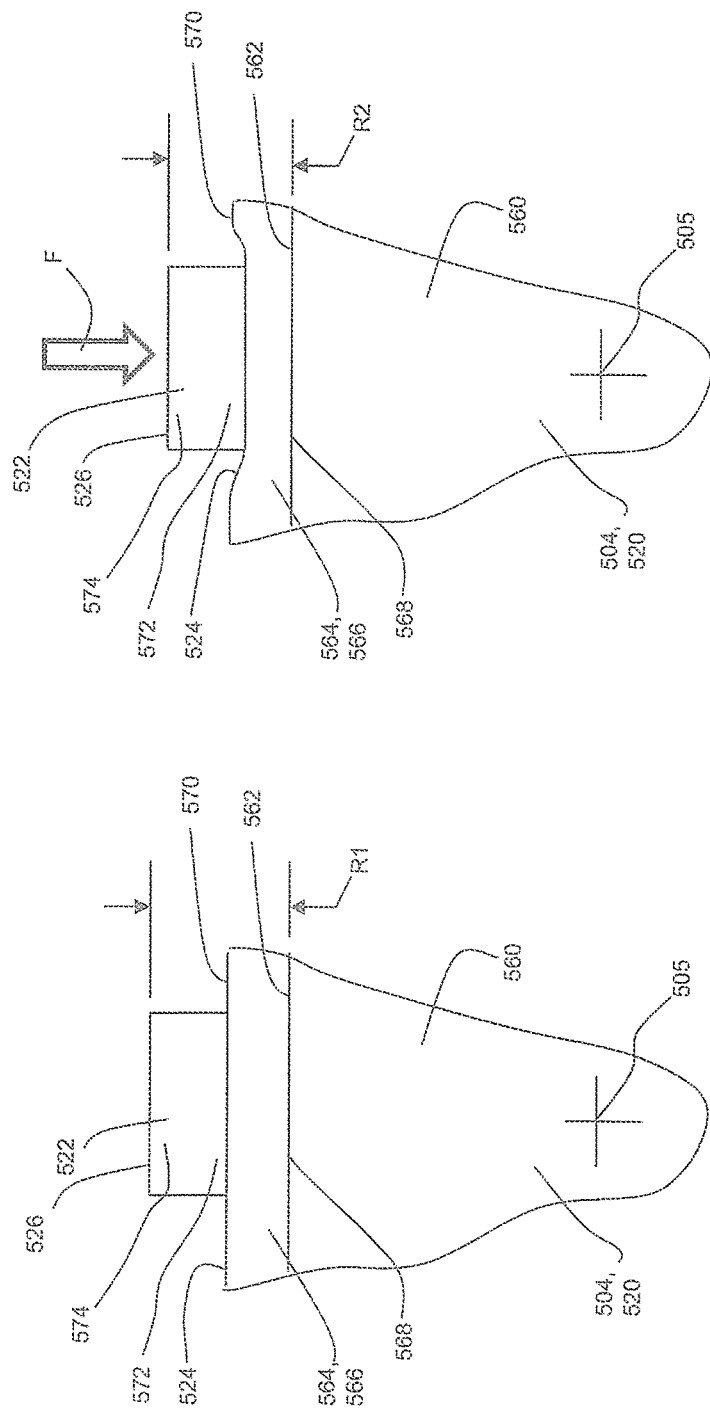


Figure 7B2

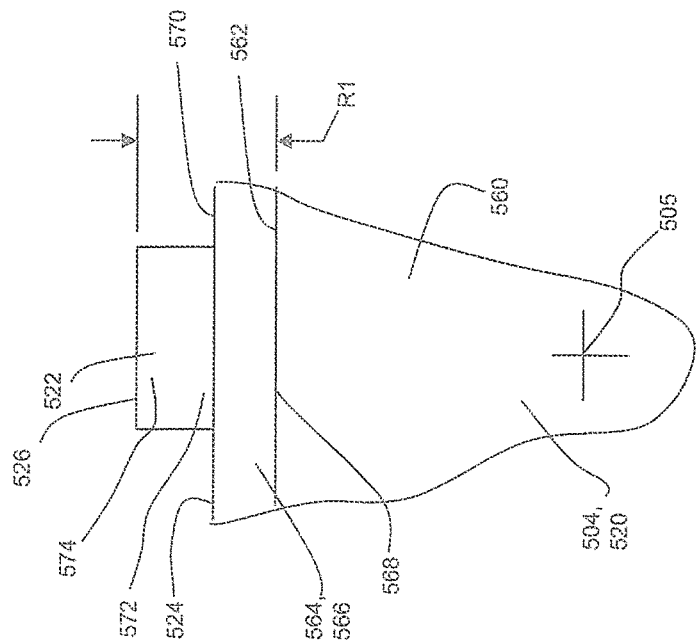


Figure B7

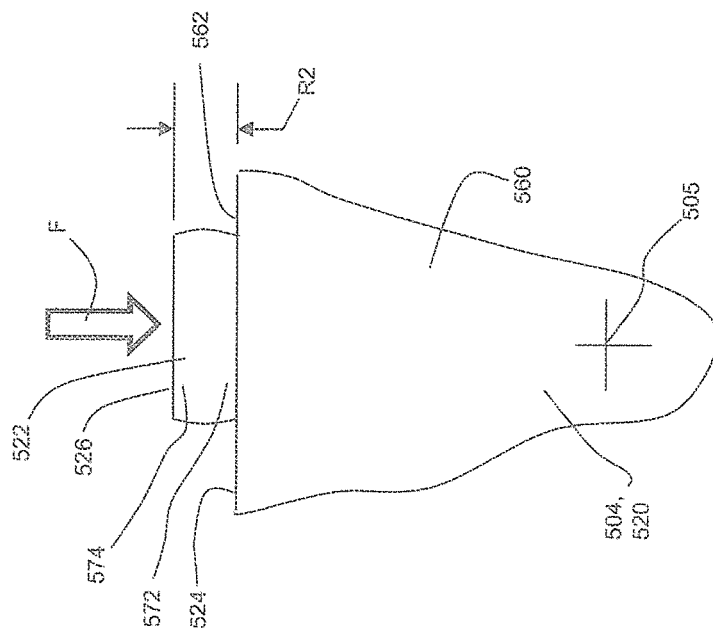


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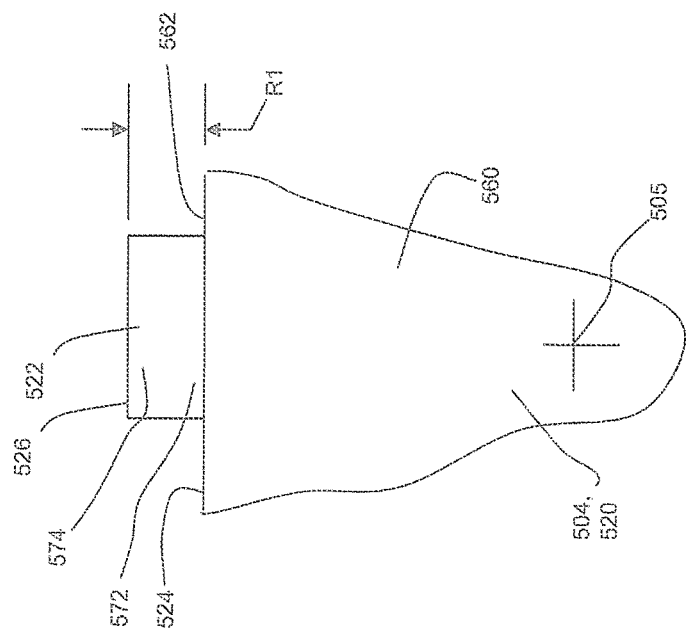
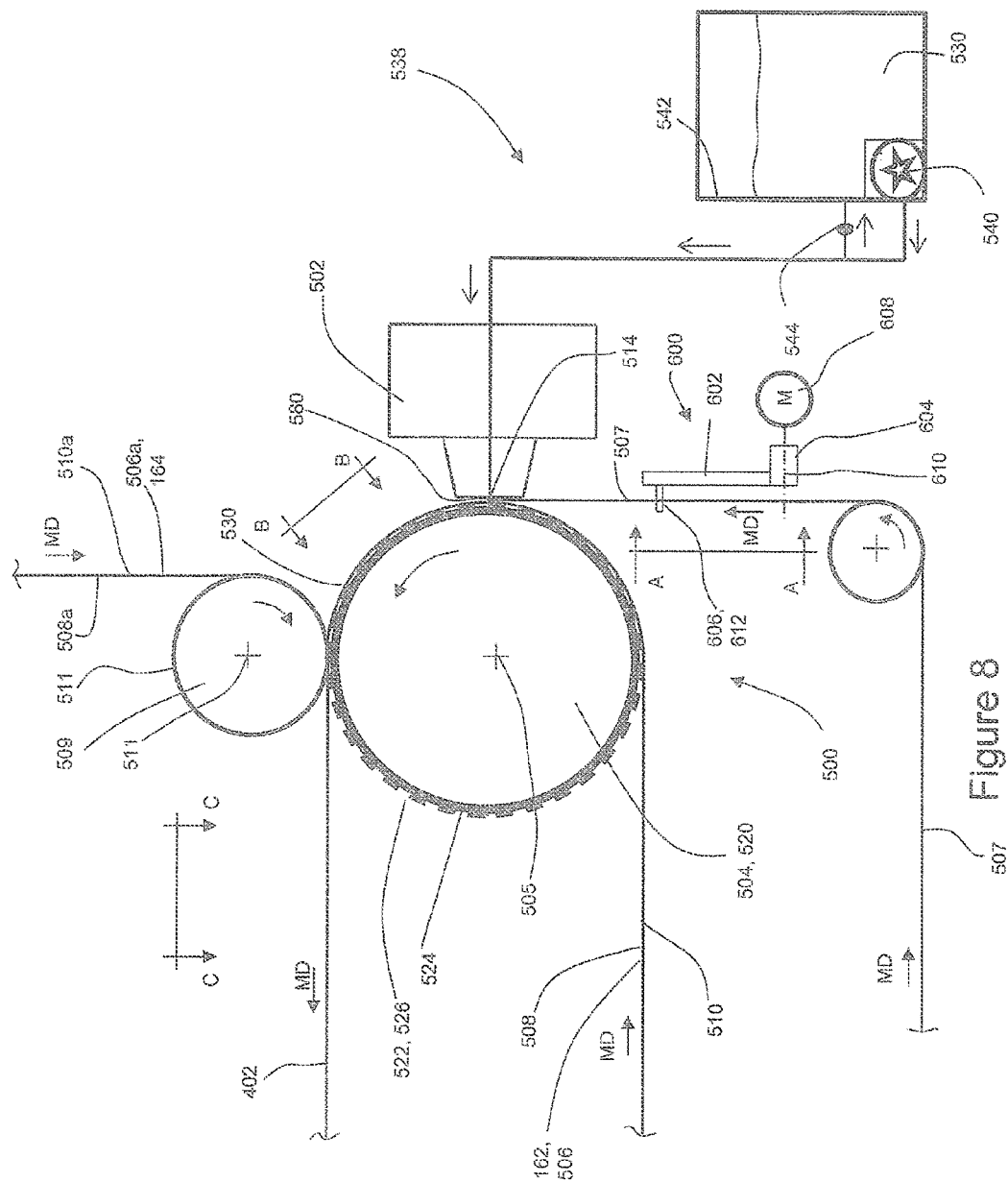


Figure 7C1



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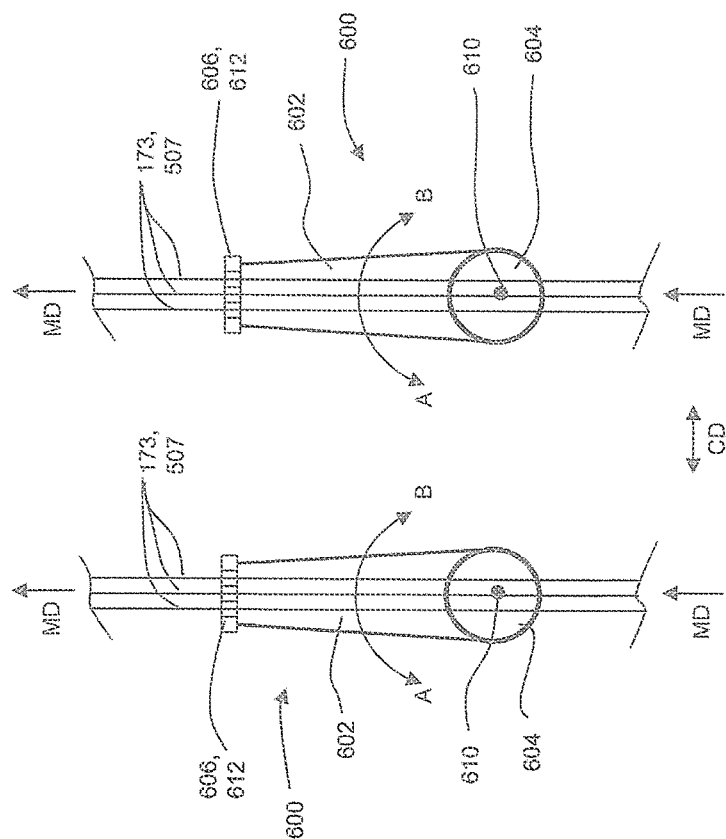


Figure 8A

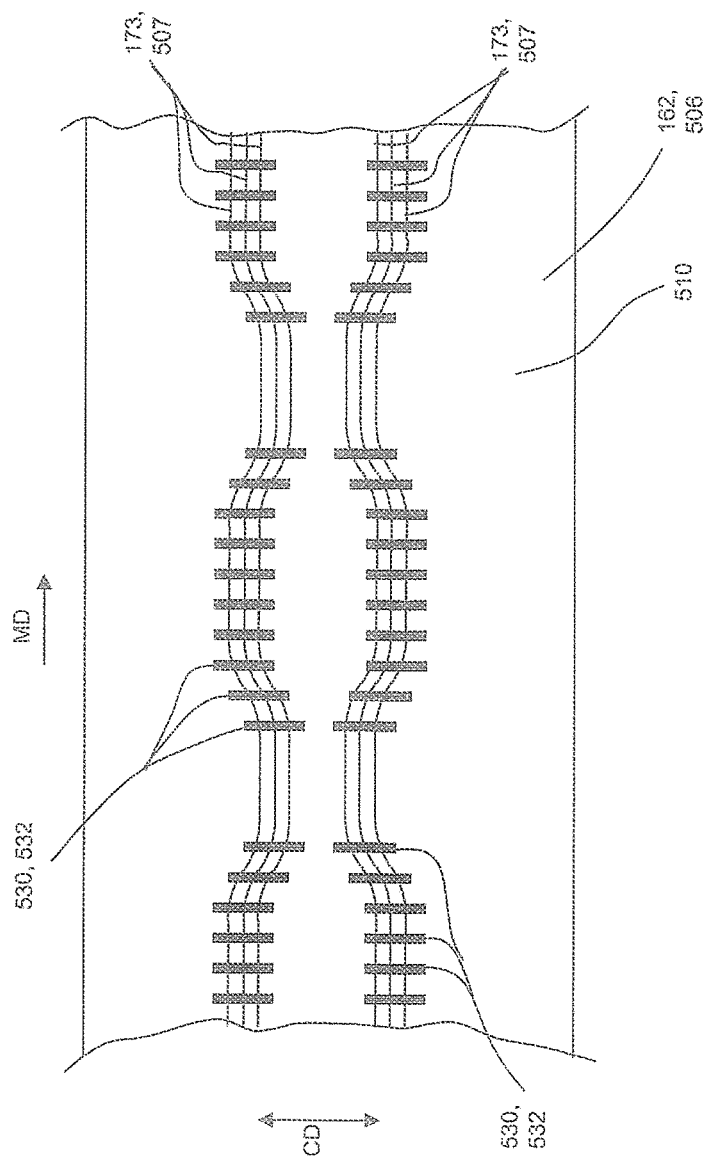
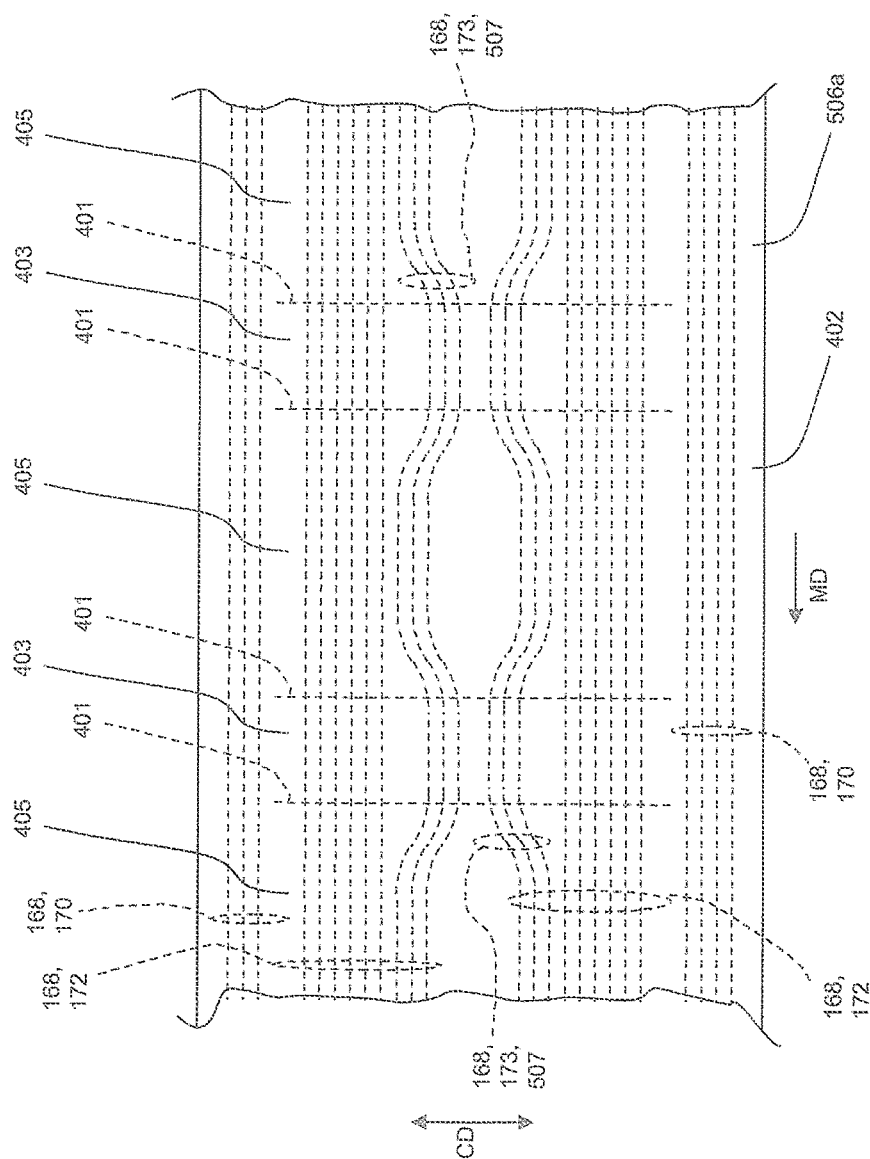


Figure 8B



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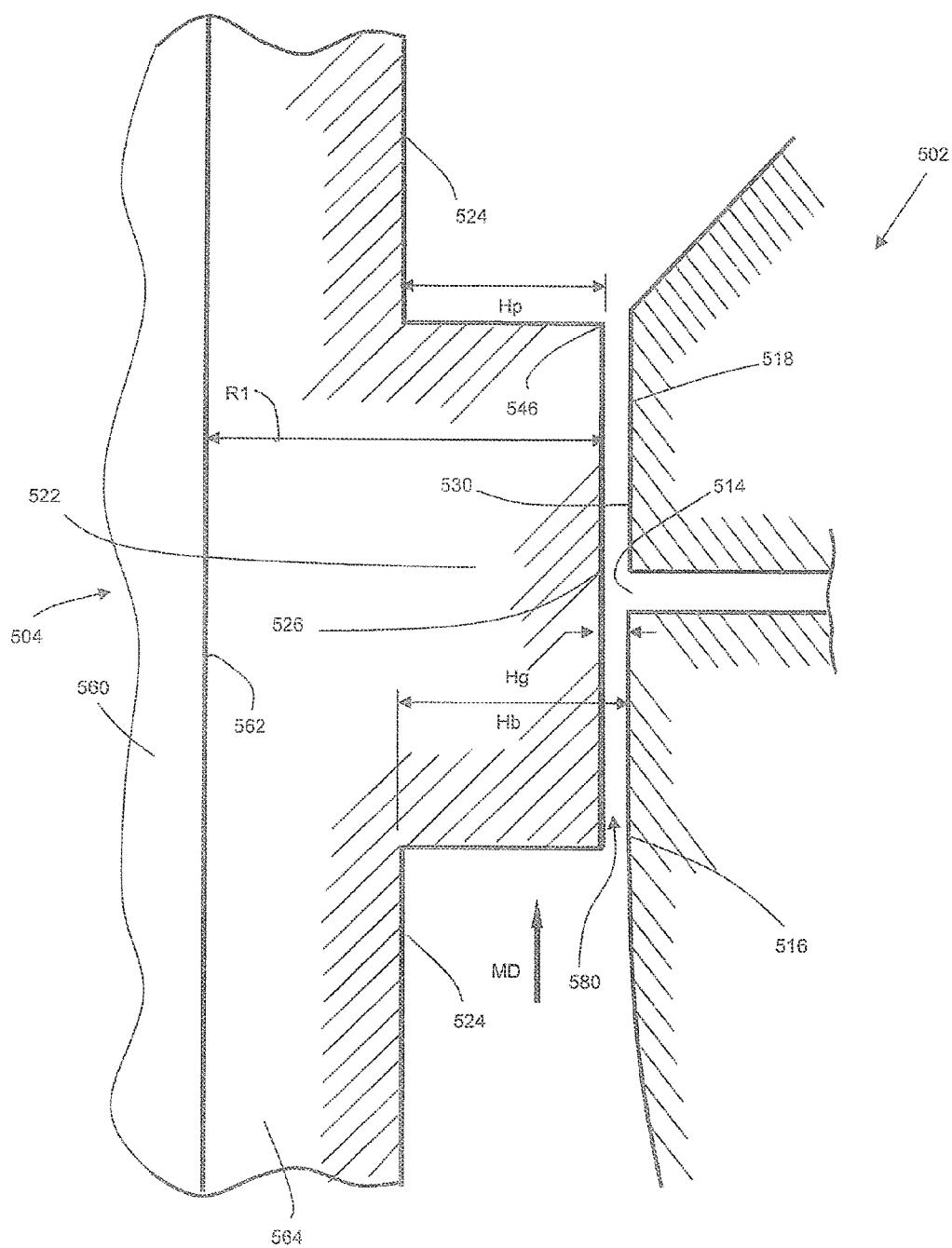


Figure 9A

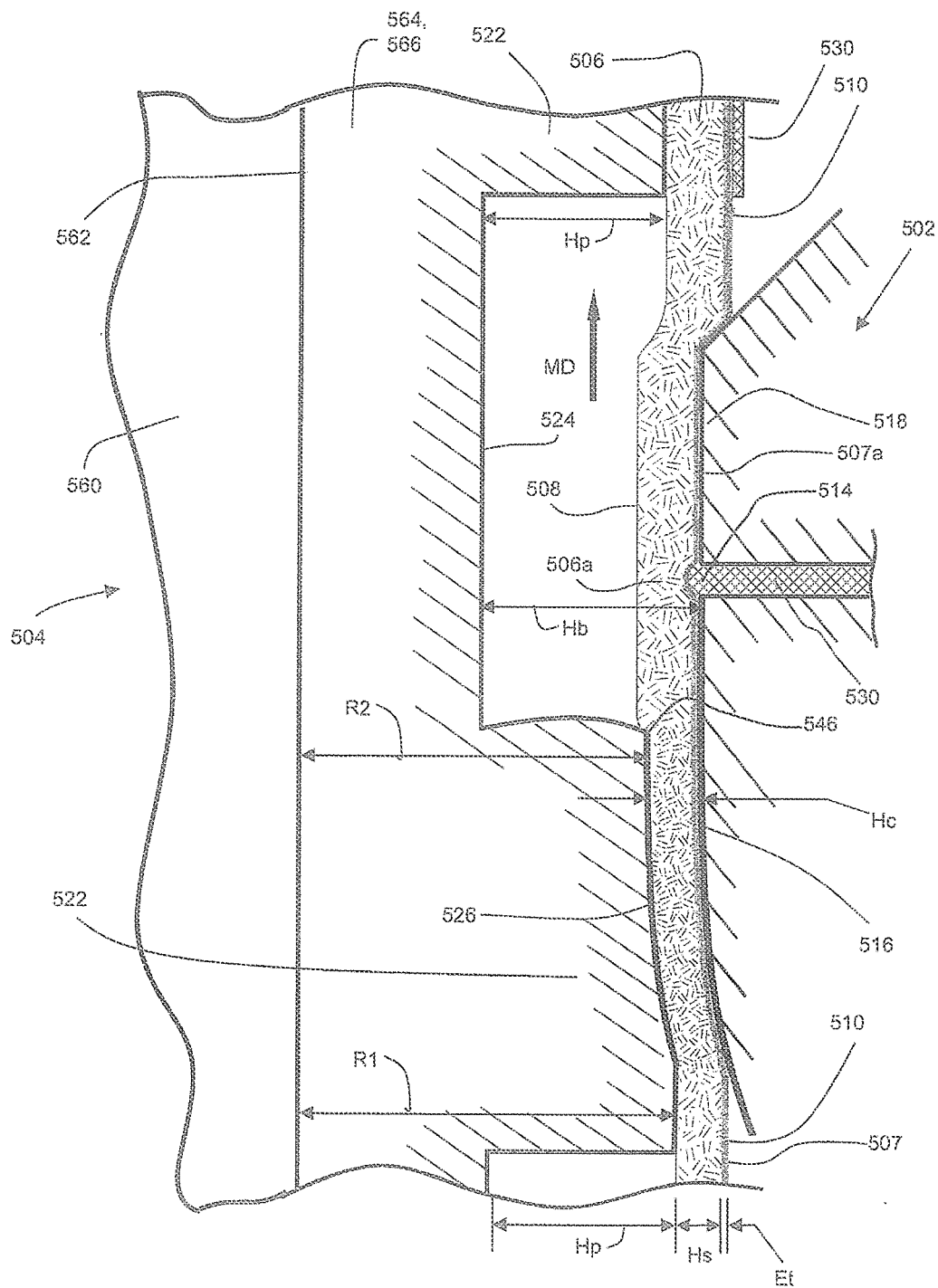


Figure 9B

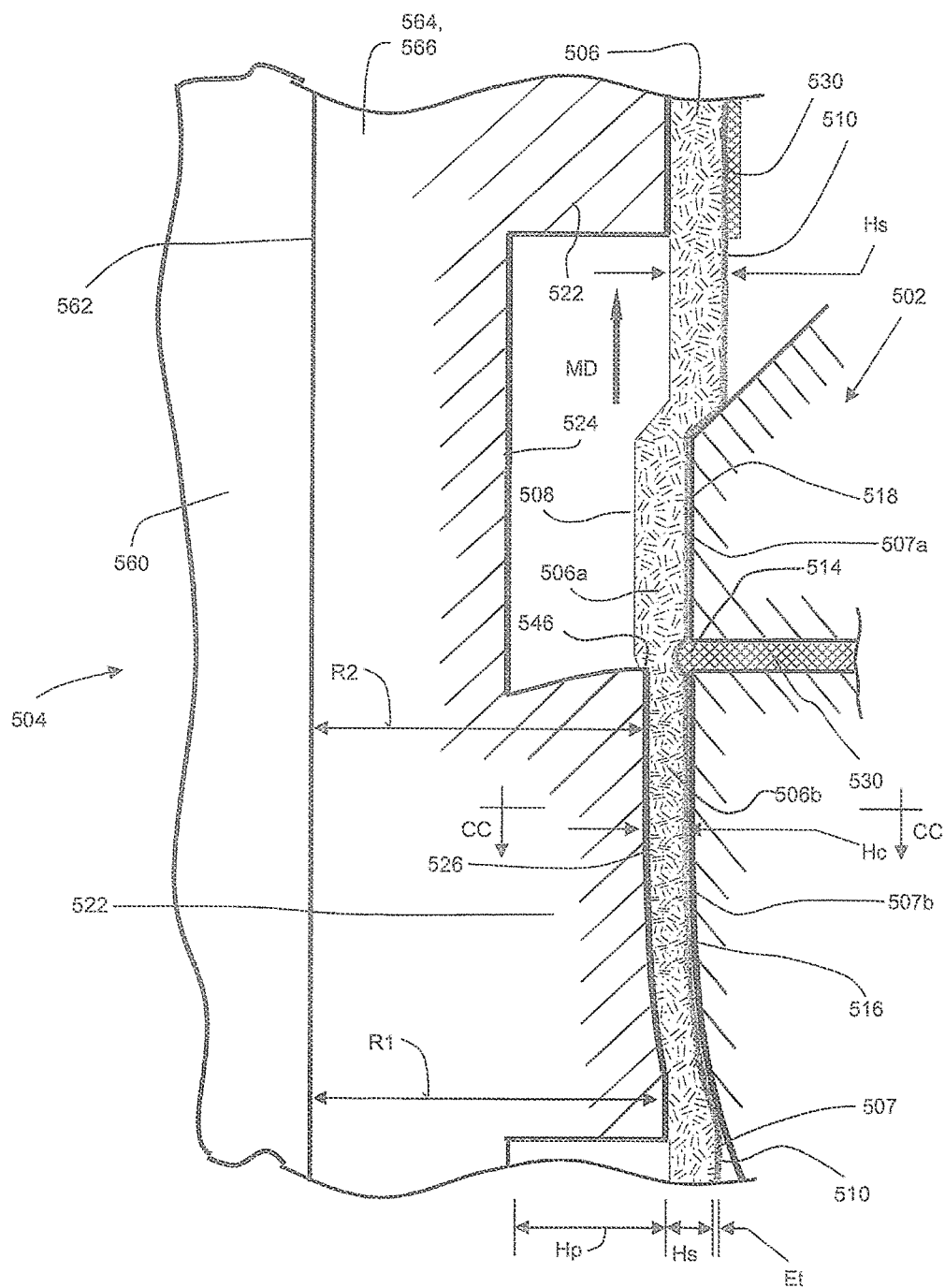
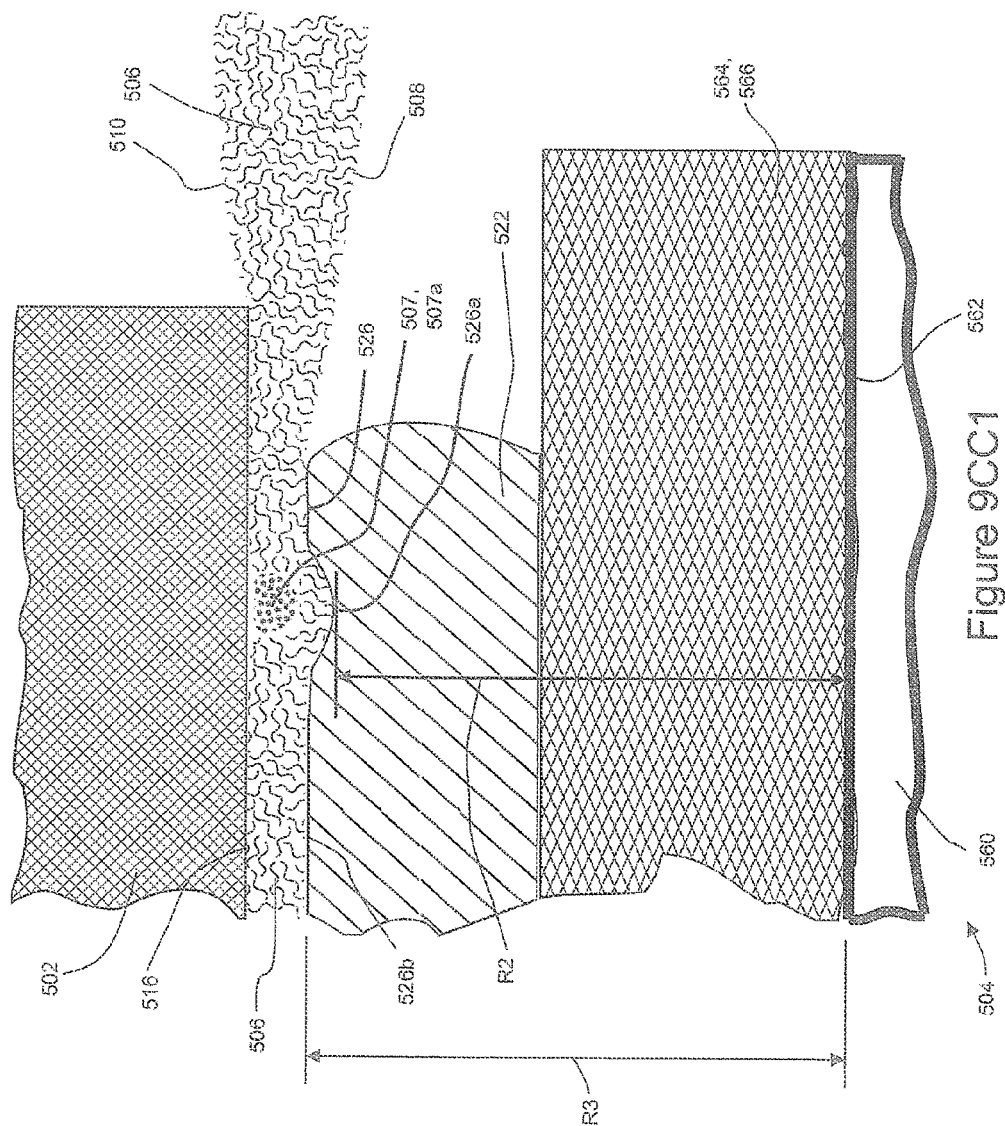
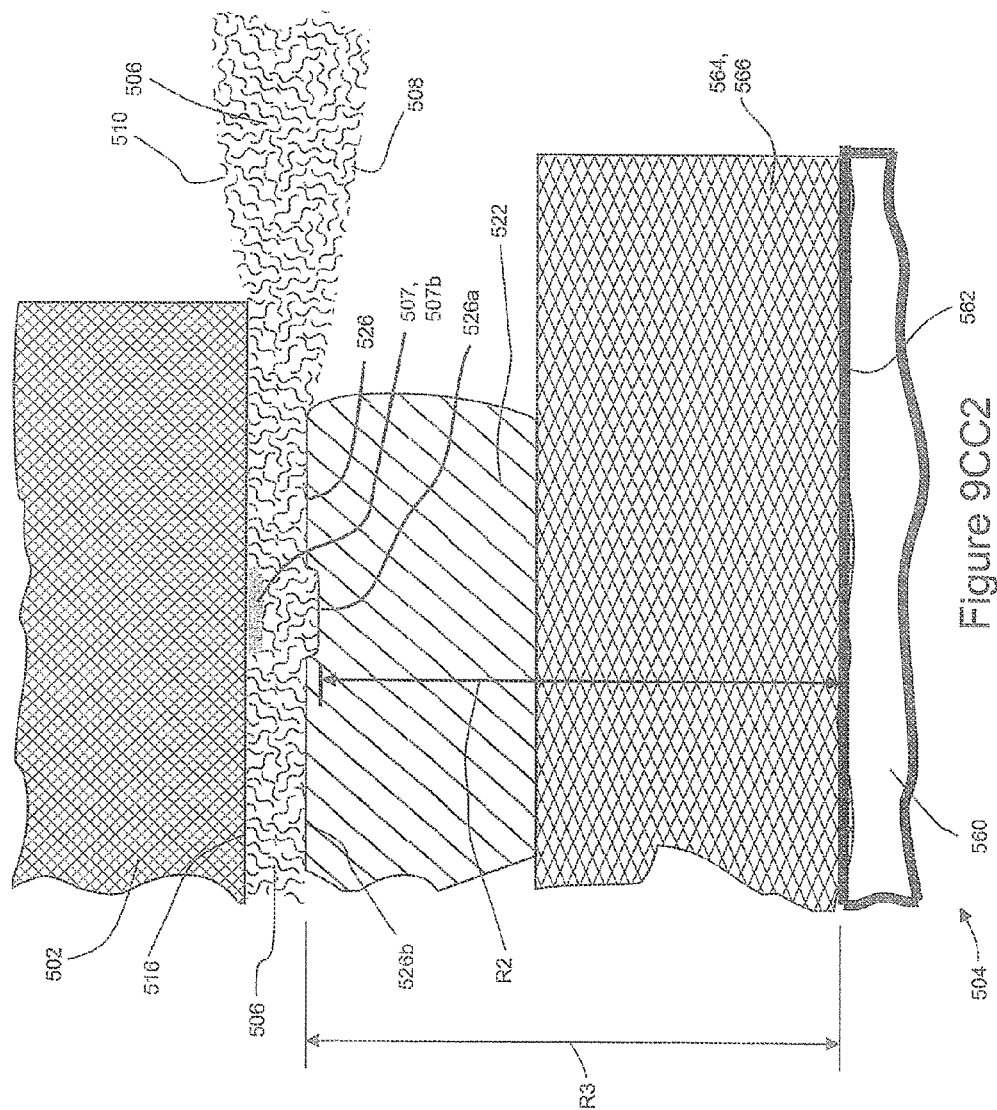


Figure 9C





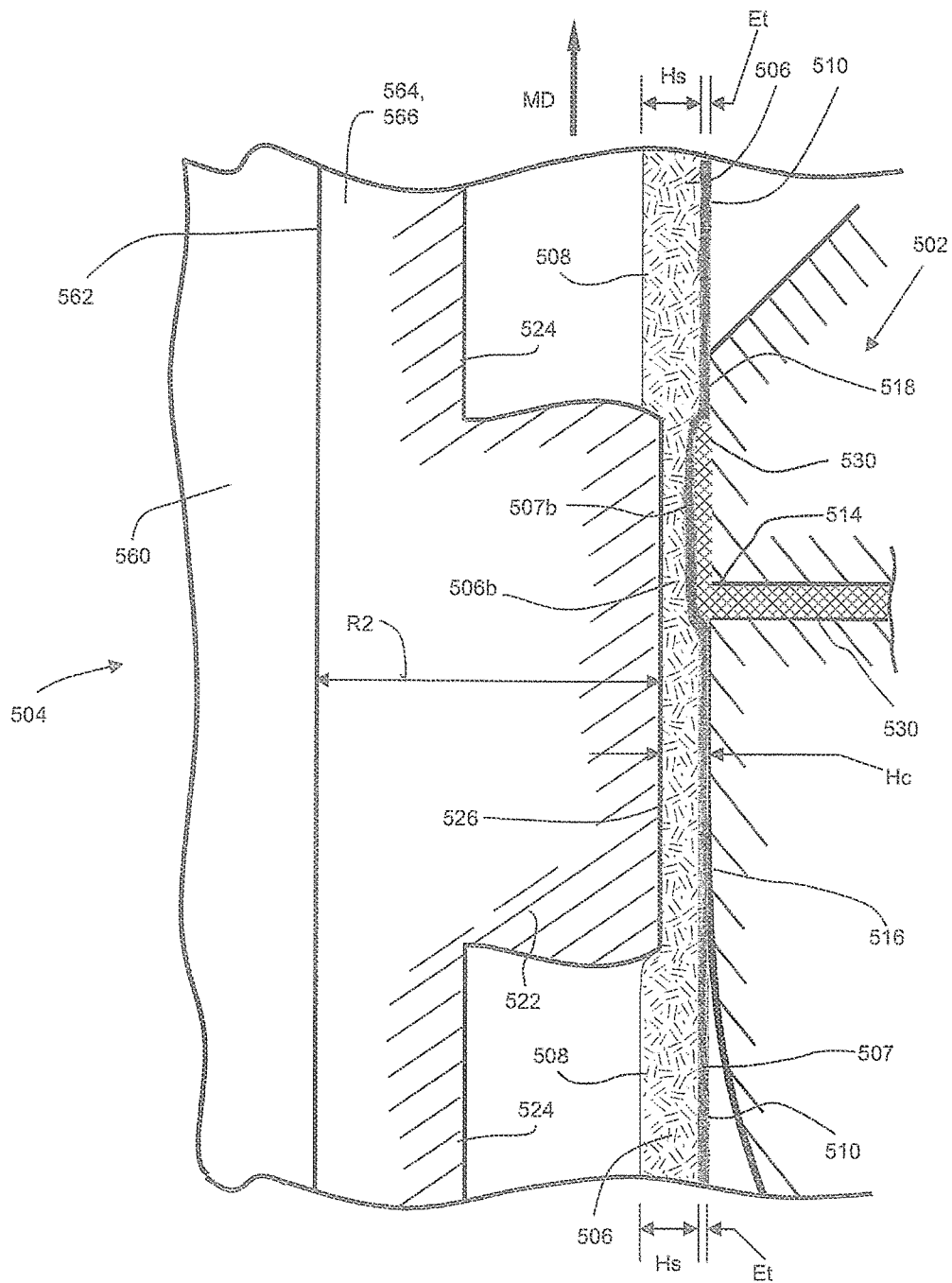


Figure 9D

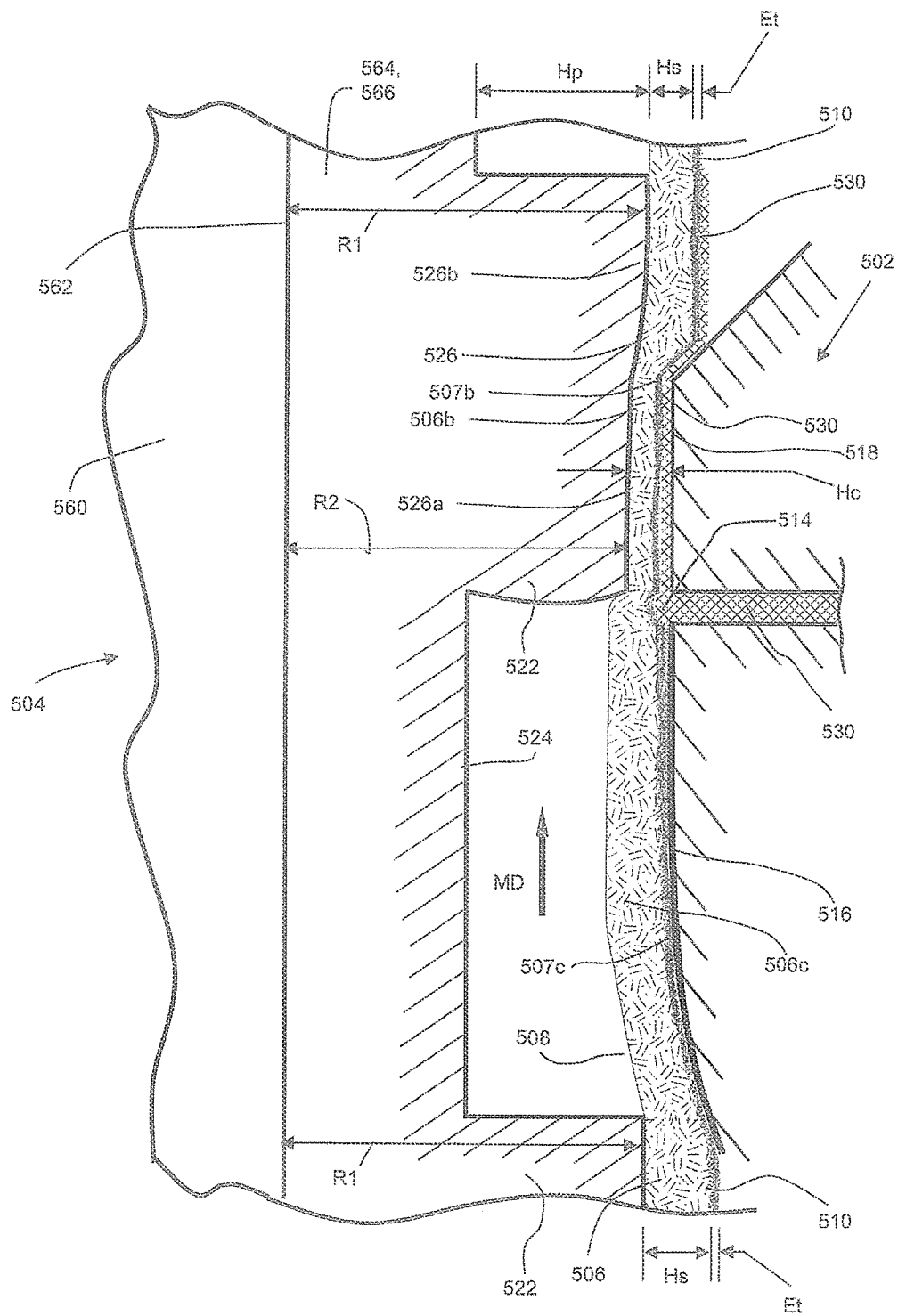


Figure 9E

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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR APPLYING AN ELASTIC MATERIAL TO A MOVING SUBSTRATE IN A CURVED PATH

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present disclosure relates to methods for manufacturing absorbent articles, and more particularly, to apparatuses and methods for applying adhesive and elastic material in a curved path to substrates.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Along an assembly line, various types of articles, such as for example, diapers and other absorbent articles, may be assembled by adding components to and otherwise modifying an advancing, continuous web of material. For example, in some processes, advancing webs of material are combined with other advancing webs of material. In other examples, individual components created from advancing webs of material are combined with advancing webs of material, which in turn, are then combined with other advancing webs of material. Webs of material and component parts used to manufacture diapers may include: backsheets, topsheets, absorbent cores, front and/or back ears, fastener components, and various types of elastic webs and components such as leg elastics, barrier leg cuff elastics, and waist elastics. Once the desired component parts are assembled, the advancing web(s) and component parts are subjected to a final knife cut to separate the web(s) into discrete diapers or other absorbent articles. The discrete diapers or absorbent articles may also then be folded and packaged.

Various methods and apparatuses may be used for attaching different components to the advancing web and/or otherwise modify the advancing web. For example, some production operations are configured to apply relatively high viscosity fluids, such as hot melt adhesives, to elastic strands to be combined with an advancing web to create an elastic laminate. In some instances, the production operations are configured to apply hot melt adhesives to advancing elastic strands and/or a web in pre-determined patterns. These operations may include the use of systems and methods such as slot die coating, direct gravure, offset gravure and reverse gravure roll coating processes that are extensively described in the art. However, current systems and methods for applying adhesives to an advancing substrate and/or elastic strands may have certain limitations.

For example, some manufacturing processes of absorbent articles such as feminine hygiene pads, baby diapers, and adult incontinence pads use electro-pneumatic switching valves to intermittently transfer adhesive to advancing elastic strands and/or substrates. However, the quality and precision of intermittent transfer of fluids to advancing elastics and/or substrates may be limited by the speed of the on/off cycle of switching valves used to interrupt the flow of fluid to the adhesive applicator. Thus, as web processing speeds increase, the ability of current adhesive application methods to achieve fine resolution of on/off coat patterns in the direction of web travel decreases. Consequently, it would be beneficial to provide apparatuses and methods that apply adhesives and other fluids to a substrate in patterns with relatively high resolution and high speeds without being limited by the speed of on/off cycling of switching valves used to interrupt the flow of fluid to the slot die of the fluid applicator.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Aspects of the methods and apparatuses relate to making elastic laminates, and more particularly, methods and appa-

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ratues for applying elastic material in a curved path onto an advancing substrate. The elastic material may be in various forms, such as for example, elastic strands and/or ribbons. Apparatuses and methods disclosed herein may also provide for the application of viscous fluids, such as adhesives, in pre-determined patterns to the elastic material while being positioned on an advancing substrate.

In one form, a method for applying an elastic material along a curved path to a substrate includes the steps of: advancing a substrate to a substrate carrier, the substrate having a first surface disposed opposite of a second surface; engaging the first surface of the substrate with the substrate carrier, the substrate carrier comprising: a non-compliant support surface and a pattern element, the pattern element including a pattern surface, the substrate carrier positioned adjacent a slot die applicator to define a nip between the pattern surface of the pattern element and the slot die applicator; positioning an elastic material on the second surface of the substrate; and advancing the second surface of the substrate and the elastic material in a machine direction through the nip while moving the elastic material in a cross direction substantially transverse to the machine direction.

In another form, a method for applying an elastic material along a curved path to a substrate includes the steps of: advancing a substrate to a substrate carrier, the substrate having a first surface disposed opposite of a second surface; engaging the first surface of the substrate with the substrate carrier, the substrate carrier comprising: a pattern element including a pattern surface, wherein the substrate carrier is positioned adjacent a slot die applicator to define a nip between the pattern surface of the pattern element and the slot die applicator; advancing an elastic material in a machine direction through the nip; deflecting the elastic material in a cross direction substantially transverse to the machine direction; positioning the elastic material on the second surface of the substrate; and discharging adhesive from the slot die applicator onto the second surface of the substrate and the elastic material while advancing through the nip.

In yet another form, an apparatus for applying an elastic material along a curved path to a substrate includes: a slot die applicator including a slot opening, a first lip, and a second lip, the slot opening located between the first lip and the second lip; a substrate carrier comprising: a non-compliant support surface and a compliant pattern element, wherein the compliant pattern element includes a pattern surface, and wherein the compliant pattern element protrudes outward relative to the non-compliant support surface to define a first minimum distance, R1, between the pattern surface and the non-compliant support surface; wherein the substrate carrier is positioned adjacent the slot die applicator to define a nip between the pattern surface and the slot die applicator, and wherein the substrate carrier is adapted to advance a substrate in a machine direction through the nip; and a guide adapted to control a lateral position of an elastic member advancing into the nip between the pattern surface and the slot die applicator.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a diaper pant.

FIG. 2A is a partially cut away plan view of the diaper pant shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3A is a cross-sectional view of the diaper pants of

FIG. 2A taken along line 3A-3A.

FIG. 3B is a cross-sectional view of the diaper pants of FIG. 2A taken along line 3B-3B.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a fluid application apparatus positioned adjacent to an advancing substrate and elastic material.

FIG. 4A is a side view of a fluid application apparatus depositing fluid onto an advancing substrate and elastic material in a first example pattern.

FIG. 4B is a side view of a fluid application apparatus depositing fluid onto an advancing substrate and elastic material in a second example pattern.

FIG. 4C is a side view of a fluid application apparatus depositing fluid onto an advancing substrate and elastic material in a third example pattern.

FIG. 4D is a side view of a fluid application apparatus depositing fluid onto an advancing substrate and elastic material in a fourth example pattern.

FIG. 5A is a perspective view of an embodiment of a substrate carrier including a pattern roller having a continuous base surface and a plurality of pattern surfaces.

FIG. 5B is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier shown in FIG. 5A taken along the line 5B-5B.

FIG. 5C is a top side view of a substrate and elastic material showing a first example adhesive pattern thereon.

FIG. 6A is a perspective view of an embodiment of a substrate carrier including a pattern roller having a continuous pattern surface and plurality of base surfaces.

FIG. 6B is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier shown in FIG. 6A taken along the line 6B-6B.

FIG. 6C is a top side view of a substrate showing a second example adhesive pattern thereon.

FIG. 7 is a schematic cross-sectional side view of an example substrate carrier.

FIG. 7A1 is a detailed view of the substrate carrier of FIG. 7 including a compliant pattern element and a compliant base layer connected with a base roll.

FIG. 7A2 is a detailed view of the pattern surface of the pattern element from FIG. 7A1 deflected by a force or forces applied to the pattern surface.

FIG. 7B1 is a detailed view of the substrate carrier of FIG. 7 including a non-compliant pattern element and a compliant base layer connected with a base roll.

FIG. 7B2 is a detailed view of the pattern surface of the pattern element from FIG. 7B1 deflected by a force or forces applied to the pattern surface.

FIG. 7C1 is a detailed view of the substrate carrier of FIG. 7 including a compliant pattern element connected with a base roll.

FIG. 7C2 is a detailed view of the pattern surface of the pattern element from FIG. 7C1 deflected by a force or forces applied to the pattern surface.

FIG. 8 is a schematic side view of a first converting configuration for making an elastic laminate.

FIG. 8A is a view of elastic material advancing toward a nip between a slot die applicator and substrate carrier from FIG. 8 taken along line A-A.

FIG. 8B is a view of elastic material applied in a curved pattern to a substrate from FIG. 8 taken along line B-B.

FIG. 8C is a view of a continuous length of an elastic laminate from FIG. 8 taken along line C-C.

FIG. 9A is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier of FIG. 8 without the substrate and elastic material wherein the pattern surface of a pattern element is adjacent a first lip, a second lip, and slot opening of the slot die applicator.

FIG. 9B is a detailed cross-sectional view of a substrate carrier, a substrate, and an elastic material advancing past a

slot die applicator and showing the substrate and elastic material between a slot opening of the slot die applicator and an advancing base surface.

FIG. 9C is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier, substrate, and elastic material of FIG. 9B wherein the base surface is advancing past the slot opening of the slot die applicator such that the substrate and elastic material are between the slot opening of the slot die applicator and a leading edge of an advancing pattern surface.

FIG. 9CC1 is a cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier and fluid application device showing an elastic strand and substrate taken along the line CC-CC in FIG. 9C.

FIG. 9CC2 is a cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier and fluid application device showing an elastic film and substrate taken along the line CC-CC in FIG. 9C.

FIG. 9D is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier, substrate, and elastic material of FIG. 9C wherein the base surface has advanced past the slot opening of the slot die applicator such that the substrate and elastic material are between the slot opening of the slot die applicator and an advancing pattern surface.

FIG. 9E is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier and substrate of FIG. 9D wherein the pattern surface has advanced past the slot opening of the slot die applicator.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The following term explanations may be useful in understanding the present disclosure:

“Absorbent article” is used herein to refer to consumer products whose primary function is to absorb and retain soils and wastes. Non-limiting examples of absorbent articles include diapers, training pants, pull-on pant-type diapers, refastenable diapers or pant-type diapers, incontinence briefs and undergarments, diaper holders and liners, feminine hygiene garments such as panty liners, absorbent inserts, and the like.

“Diaper” is used herein to refer to an absorbent article generally worn by infants and incontinent persons about the lower torso.

The term “disposable” is used herein to describe absorbent articles which generally are not intended to be laundered or otherwise restored or reused as an absorbent article (e.g., they are intended to be discarded after a single use and may also be configured to be recycled, composted or otherwise disposed of in an environmentally compatible manner).

The term “disposed” is used herein to mean that an element (s) is formed (joined and positioned) in a particular place or position as a macro-unitary structure with other elements or as a separate element joined to another element.

As used herein, the term “joined” encompasses configurations whereby an element is directly secured to another element by affixing the element directly to the other element, and configurations whereby an element is indirectly secured to another element by affixing the element to intermediate member(s) which in turn are affixed to the other element.

The term “substrate” is used herein to describe a material which is primarily two-dimensional (i.e. in an XY plane) and whose thickness (in a Z direction) is relatively small (i.e. $\frac{1}{10}$ or less) in comparison to its length (in an X direction) and width (in a Y direction). Non-limiting examples of substrates include a layer or layers of fibrous materials, films and foils such as plastic films or metallic foils that may be used alone or laminated to one or more web, layer, film and/or foil. As such, a web is a substrate.

The term “nonwoven” refers herein to a material made from continuous (long) filaments (fibers) and/or discontinu-

ous (short) filaments (fibers) by processes such as spunbonding, meltblowing, and the like. Nonwovens do not have a woven or knitted filament pattern.

The term “machine direction” (MD) is used herein to refer to the direction of material flow through a process. In addition, relative placement and movement of material can be described as flowing in the machine direction through a process from upstream in the process to downstream in the process.

The term “cross direction” (CD) is used herein to refer to a direction that is generally perpendicular to the machine direction.

The terms “elastic” and “elastomeric” as used herein refer to any material that upon application of a biasing force, can stretch to an elongated length of at least about 110% of its relaxed, original length (i.e. can stretch to 10% more than its original length), without rupture or breakage, and upon release of the applied force, recovers at least about 40% of its elongation. For example, a material that has an initial length of 100 mm can extend at least to 110 mm, and upon removal of the force would retract to a length of 106 mm (40% recovery). The term “inelastic” refers herein to any material that does not fall within the definition of “elastic” above.

The term “extensible” as used herein refers to any material that upon application of a biasing force, can stretch to an elongated length of at least about 110% of its relaxed, original length (i.e. can stretch to 10%), without rupture or breakage, and upon release of the applied force, shows little recovery, less than about 40% of its elongation.

The terms “activating”, “activation” or “mechanical activation” refer to the process of making a substrate, or an elastomeric laminate more extensible than it was prior to the process.

“Live Stretch” includes stretching elastic and bonding the stretched elastic to a substrate. After bonding, the stretched elastic is released causing it to contract, resulting in a “corrugated” substrate. The corrugated substrate can stretch as the corrugated portion is pulled to about the point that the substrate reaches at least one original flat dimension. However, if the substrate is also elastic, then the substrate can stretch beyond the relaxed length of the substrate prior to bonding with the elastic. The elastic is stretched at least 25% of its relaxed length when it is bonded to the substrate.

As used herein, the term “unconstrained caliper” refers to the caliper of the substrate measured according to Edana WSP 120.1 (05), with a circular presser foot having a diameter of 25.40 ± 0.02 mm and an applied force of 2.1 N (i.e. a pressure of 4.14 ± 0.21 kPa is applied).

As used herein, the term “compliant” refers to any material with a durometer hardness of 90 or less as measured according to ASTM International Designation: D2240-05 (Reapproved 2010) for Type M durometers.

As used herein, the term “non-compliant” refers to any material with a hardness value greater than 100 HRBW as defined on the Rockwell B Scale in the American National Standard Designation.

Aspects of the present disclosure involve methods and apparatuses for making elastic laminates, and more particularly, methods and apparatuses for applying elastic material in a curved path onto an advancing substrate. The elastic material may be in various forms, such as for example, elastic strands and/or ribbons. Particular embodiments of the apparatuses and methods disclosed herein also provide for the application of viscous fluids, such as adhesives, in pre-determined patterns to the elastic material while being positioned on an advancing substrate. Embodiments of a curved elastic application apparatus are discussed in more detail below in

the context of applying adhesives to a substrate and elastic material advancing in a machine direction through a nip defined between a substrate carrier and a slot die applicator. A guide controls a lateral or cross directional position of the elastic material entering the nip, thus applying the elastic material to the substrate in a curved path. As discussed below, the substrate may have an unconstrained caliper, H_s , and has a first surface disposed opposite of a second surface, and the elastic material may have a maximum thickness, E_t . The slot die applicator may include a slot opening, a first lip, and a second lip, the slot opening located between the first lip and the second lip. And the substrate carrier may be adapted to advance the substrate and the elastic material past the slot die applicator as the slot die applicator discharges adhesive onto the substrate and the elastic material. In operation, when the first surface of the substrate is disposed on the substrate carrier and the elastic material is positioned on the second surface of the substrate, the substrate carrier advances the second surface of the substrate and the elastic material past the slot opening of the slot die applicator. It is to be appreciated that the apparatus and processes disclosed herein may be used to apply various types of fluids, such as adhesives, in various different patterns to an advancing substrate and elastic materials other than those described and depicted herein.

As discussed in more detail below, the substrate carrier may include a base surface and a pattern element. The pattern element includes a pattern surface and protrudes outward from the base surface. As such, in substrate carriers configured with a base surface, the pattern surface and the base surface are separated by a distance, H_p . In addition, the substrate carrier is positioned adjacent the slot die applicator to define a nip between the substrate carrier and the slot die applicator. In turn, the nip may be defined by a minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface of the pattern element and the first lip and the second lip of the slot die applicator that is less than the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate, and wherein a sum of the distance, H_p , and distance, H_g , is greater than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material. Thus, as the substrate carrier advances the second surface of the substrate and elastic material through the nip and past the slot opening, the pattern element is advanced such that the pattern surface repeatedly advances past the first lip, the slot opening, and the second lip of the slot die applicator. As discussed below, the pattern element and/or the base surface of the substrate carrier may be compliant or compressible. And as such, the pattern element and/or the base surface of the substrate carrier is intermittently compressed as the substrate and elastic material advance through the nip between the slot die applicator and the pattern surface. As such, the pattern surface of the pattern element deflects away from the slot die applicator as the substrate, the elastic material, and the pattern element advance past the first lip, the slot opening, and the second lip of the slot die applicator. As the pattern surface is intermittently deflected away from the slot die applicator, adhesive discharged from the slot die applicator is applied onto the elastic material and the second surface of the advancing substrate. More particularly, the adhesive is applied to the elastic material and the substrate in an area having a shape that is substantially the same as a shape defined by the pattern surface.

The apparatuses and methods disclosed herein may include substrate carriers having various configurations. For example, in some embodiments the substrate carrier may be configured as a roller. In other embodiments, the substrate carrier may include an endless belt. The substrate carriers may also utilize various outer surface arrangements. For

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example, the base surface may be configured as a continuous surface and the substrate carrier may include a plurality of discrete pattern elements separated from each other by the continuous surface. In such a configuration, each pattern element may include a pattern surface and each pattern element may protrude outward from the continuous surface such that each pattern surface is separated from the continuous surface by the distance, H_p . In another example, the pattern surface may be configured as a continuous surface and the base surface may include a plurality of discrete base surfaces separated from each other by the pattern element. In such a configuration, the pattern element may protrude outward from each of the base surfaces such that each base surface is separated from the continuous surface by the distance, H_p . It is to be appreciated that the pattern surface of the pattern element may be configured in various different shapes and sizes and may be configured to define various different patterns. As such, adhesive may be transferred from the slot die applicator to define various patterns on a substrate.

As previously mentioned, the curved elastic application methods and apparatus herein also include a guide adjacent the nip defined between the substrate carrier and the slot die applicator. The guide engages the advancing elastic material before entering the nip and deflects the elastic material laterally or in a cross direction that is substantially orthogonal or transverse to the machine direction of the substrate advancing through the nip. Deflection of the elastic material in the cross direction causes the elastic material to enter the nip along different cross directional locations relative to the substrate. As such, the cross directional deflection of the elastic material allows the elastic material to be applied to the advancing substrate along a curved path.

The processes and apparatuses discussed herein may be used to assemble elastic laminates in various types of substrate configurations, some of which may be used in the manufacturing of different types of absorbent articles. To help provide additional context to the subsequent discussion of the process embodiments, the following provides a general description of absorbent articles in the form of diapers that may include elastic laminates that may be assembled in accordance with the methods and apparatuses disclosed herein. Although the methods and apparatuses herein are discussed below in the context of manufacturing absorbent articles, it is to be appreciated that the assembly methods and apparatuses herein may be configured to manufacture various types of elastic laminates.

FIGS. 1 and 2A show an example of a diaper **100** that may include elastic laminates assembled in accordance with the apparatuses and methods disclosed herein. In particular, FIG. 1 shows a perspective view of a diaper pant **100** in a pre-fastened configuration, and FIG. 2A shows a plan view of the diaper pant **100** with the portion of the diaper that faces away from a wearer oriented towards the viewer. The diaper pant **100** shown in FIGS. 1 and 2A includes a chassis **102** and a ring-like elastic belt **104**. As discussed below in more detail, a first elastic belt **106** and a second elastic belt **108** are connected together to form the ring-like elastic belt **104**.

With continued reference to FIG. 2A, the chassis **102** includes a first waist region **116**, a second waist region **118**, and a crotch region **119** disposed intermediate the first and second waist regions. The first waist region **116** may be configured as a front waist region, and the second waist region **118** may be configured as back waist region. In some embodiments, the length of each of the front waist region, back waist region, and crotch region may be $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length of the absorbent article **100**. The diaper **100** may also include a laterally extending front waist edge **120** in the front waist

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region **116** and a longitudinally opposing and laterally extending back waist edge **122** in the back waist region **118**. To provide a frame of reference for the present discussion, the diaper **100** and chassis **102** of FIG. 2A is shown with a longitudinal axis **124** and a lateral axis **126**. In some embodiments, the longitudinal axis **124** may extend through the front waist edge **120** and through the back waist edge **122**. And the lateral axis **126** may extend through a first longitudinal or right side edge **128** and through a midpoint of a second longitudinal or left side edge **130** of the chassis **102**.

As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2A, the diaper pant **100** may include an inner, body facing surface **132**, and an outer, garment facing surface **134**. The chassis **102** may include a backsheet **136** and a topsheet **138**. The chassis **102** may also include an absorbent assembly **140** including an absorbent core **142** may be disposed between a portion of the topsheet **138** and the backsheet **136**. As discussed in more detail below, the diaper **100** may also include other features, such as leg elastics and/or leg cuffs to enhance the fit around the legs of the wearer.

As shown in FIG. 2A, the periphery of the chassis **102** may be defined by the first longitudinal side edge **128**, a second longitudinal side edge **130**; a first laterally extending end edge **144** disposed in the first waist region **116**; and a second laterally extending end edge **146** disposed in the second waist region **118**. Both side edges **128** and **130** extend longitudinally between the first end edge **144** and the second end edge **146**. As shown in FIG. 2A, the laterally extending end edges **144** and **146** are located longitudinally inward from the laterally extending front waist edge **120** in the front waist region **116** and the laterally extending back waist edge **122** in the back waist region **118**. When the diaper pant **100** is worn on the lower torso of a wearer, the front waist edge **120** and the back waist edge **122** of the chassis **102** may encircle a portion of the waist of the wearer. At the same time, the chassis side edges **128** and **130** may encircle at least a portion of the legs of the wearer. And the crotch region **119** may be generally positioned between the legs of the wearer with the absorbent core **142** extending from the front waist region **116** through the crotch region **119** to the back waist region **118**.

It is to also be appreciated that a portion or the whole of the diaper **100** may also be made laterally extensible. The additional extensibility may help allow the diaper **100** to conform to the body of a wearer during movement by the wearer. The additional extensibility may also help, for example, allow the user of the diaper **100** including a chassis **102** having a particular size before extension to extend the front waist region **116**, the back waist region **118**, or both waist regions of the diaper **100** and/or chassis **102** to provide additional body coverage for wearers of differing size, i.e., to tailor the diaper to an individual wearer. Such extension of the waist region or regions may give the absorbent article a generally hourglass shape, so long as the crotch region is extended to a relatively lesser degree than the waist region or regions, and may impart a tailored appearance to the article when it is worn.

As previously mentioned, the diaper pant **100** may include a backsheet **136**. The backsheet **136** may also define the outer surface **134** of the chassis **102**. The backsheet **136** may be impervious to fluids (e.g., menses, urine, and/or runny feces) and may be manufactured from a thin plastic film, although other flexible liquid impervious materials may also be used. The backsheet **136** may prevent the exudates absorbed and contained in the absorbent core from wetting articles which contact the diaper **100**, such as bedsheets, pajamas and undergarments. The backsheet **136** may also comprise a woven or nonwoven material, polymeric films such as thermoplastic films of polyethylene or polypropylene, and/or a multi-layer

or composite materials comprising a film and a nonwoven material (e.g., having an inner film layer and an outer nonwoven layer). The backsheet may also comprise an elastomeric film. An example backsheet **136** may be a polyethylene film having a thickness of from about 0.012 mm (0.5 mils) to about 0.051 mm (2.0 mils). Exemplary polyethylene films are manufactured by Clopay Corporation of Cincinnati, Ohio, under the designation BR-120 and BR-121 and by Tredegar Film Products of Terre Haute, Ind., under the designation XP-39385. The backsheet **136** may also be embossed and/or matte-finished to provide a more clothlike appearance. Further, the backsheet **136** may permit vapors to escape from the absorbent core (i.e., the backsheet is breathable) while still preventing exudates from passing through the backsheet **136**. The size of the backsheet **136** may be dictated by the size of the absorbent core **142** and/or particular configuration or size of the diaper **100**.

Also described above, the diaper pant **100** may include a topsheet **138**. The topsheet **138** may also define all or part of the inner surface **132** of the chassis **102**. The topsheet **138** may be compliant, soft feeling, and non-irritating to the wearer's skin. It may be elastically stretchable in one or two directions. Further, the topsheet **138** may be liquid pervious, permitting liquids (e.g., menses, urine, and/or runny feces) to penetrate through its thickness. A topsheet **138** may be manufactured from a wide range of materials such as woven and nonwoven materials; apertured or hydroformed thermoplastic films; apertured nonwovens, porous foams; reticulated foams; reticulated thermoplastic films; and thermoplastic scrims. Woven and nonwoven materials may comprise natural fibers such as wood or cotton fibers; synthetic fibers such as polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene fibers; or combinations thereof. If the topsheet **138** includes fibers, the fibers may be spunbond, carded, wet-laid, meltblown, hydroentangled, or otherwise processed as is known in the art.

Topsheets **138** may be selected from high loft nonwoven topsheets, apertured film topsheets and apertured nonwoven topsheets. Apertured film topsheets may be pervious to bodily exudates, yet substantially non-absorbent, and have a reduced tendency to allow fluids to pass back through and rewet the wearer's skin. Exemplary apertured films may include those described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,628,097; 5,916,661; 6,545,197; and 6,107,539.

As mentioned above, the diaper pant **100** may also include an absorbent assembly **140** that is joined to the chassis **102**. As shown in FIG. 2A, the absorbent assembly **140** may have a laterally extending front edge **148** in the front waist region **116** and may have a longitudinally opposing and laterally extending back edge **150** in the back waist region **118**. The absorbent assembly may have a longitudinally extending right side edge **152** and may have a laterally opposing and longitudinally extending left side edge **154**, both absorbent assembly side edges **152** and **154** may extend longitudinally between the front edge **148** and the back edge **150**. The absorbent assembly **140** may additionally include one or more absorbent cores **142** or absorbent core layers. The absorbent core **142** may be at least partially disposed between the topsheet **138** and the backsheet **136** and may be formed in various sizes and shapes that are compatible with the diaper. Exemplary absorbent structures for use as the absorbent core of the present disclosure are described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,610,678; 4,673,402; 4,888,231; and 4,834,735.

Some absorbent core embodiments may comprise fluid storage cores that contain reduced amounts of cellulosic airfelt material. For instance, such cores may comprise less than about 40%, 30%, 20%, 10%, 5%, or even 1% of cellulosic airfelt material. Such a core may comprises primarily absor-

bent gelling material in amounts of at least about 60%, 70%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, or even about 100%, where the remainder of the core comprises a microfiber glue (if applicable). Such cores, microfiber glues, and absorbent gelling materials are described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,599,335; 5,562,646; 5,669,894; and 6,790,798 as well as U.S. Patent Publication Nos. 2004/0158212 and 2004/0097895.

As previously mentioned, the diaper **100** may also include elasticized leg cuffs **156**. It is to be appreciated that the leg cuffs **156** can be and are sometimes also referred to as leg bands, side flaps, barrier cuffs, elastic cuffs or gasketing cuffs. The elasticized leg cuffs **156** may be configured in various ways to help reduce the leakage of body exudates in the leg regions. Example leg cuffs **156** may include those described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 3,860,003; 4,909,803; 4,695,278; 4,795,454; 4,704,115; 4,909,803; U.S. Patent Publication No. 2009/0312730A1; and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,503, entitled "METHODS AND APPARATUSES FOR MAKING LEG CUFFS FOR ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012.

As mentioned above, diaper pants may be manufactured with a ring-like elastic belt **104** and provided to consumers in a configuration wherein the front waist region **116** and the back waist region **118** are connected to each other as packaged, prior to being applied to the wearer. As such, diaper pants may have a continuous perimeter waist opening **110** and continuous perimeter leg openings **112** such as shown in FIG. 1.

As previously mentioned, the ring-like elastic belt **104** is defined by a first elastic belt **106** connected with a second elastic belt **108**. As shown in FIG. 2A, the first elastic belt **106** defines first and second opposing end regions **106a**, **106b** and a central region **106c**, and the second elastic **108** belt defines first and second opposing end regions **108a**, **108b** and a central region **108c**.

The central region **106c** of the first elastic belt is connected with the first waist region **116** of the chassis **102**, and the central region **108c** of the second elastic belt **108** is connected with the second waist region **118** of the chassis **102**. As shown in FIG. 1, the first end region **106a** of the first elastic belt **106** is connected with the first end region **108a** of the second elastic belt **108** at first side seam **178**, and the second end region **106b** of the first elastic belt **106** is connected with the second end region **108b** of the second elastic belt **108** at second side seam **180** to define the ring-like elastic belt **104** as well as the waist opening **110** and leg openings **112**.

As shown in FIGS. 2A, 3A, and 3B, the first elastic belt **106** also defines an outer lateral edge **107a** and an inner lateral edge **107b**, and the second elastic belt **108** defines an outer lateral edge **109a** and an inner lateral edge **109b**. The outer lateral edges **107a**, **109a** may also define the front waist edge **120** and the laterally extending back waist edge **122**. The first elastic belt and the second elastic belt may also each include an outer, garment facing layer **162** and an inner, wearer facing layer **164**. It is to be appreciated that the first elastic belt **106** and the second elastic belt **108** may comprise the same materials and/or may have the same structure. In some embodiments, the first elastic belt **106** and the second elastic belt may comprise different materials and/or may have different structures. It should also be appreciated that the first elastic belt **106** and the second elastic belt **108** may be constructed from various materials. For example, the first and second belts may be manufactured from materials such as plastic films; apertured plastic films; woven or nonwoven webs of natural materials (e.g., wood or cotton fibers), synthetic fibers (e.g., polyolefins, polyamides, polyester, polyethylene, or polypropylene fibers) or a combination of natural and/or syn-

thetic fibers; or coated woven or nonwoven webs. In some embodiments, the first and second elastic belts include a nonwoven web of synthetic fibers, and may include a stretchable nonwoven. In other embodiments, the first and second elastic belts include an inner hydrophobic, non-stretchable nonwoven material and an outer hydrophobic, non-stretchable nonwoven material.

The first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** may also each include belt elastic material interposed between the outer layer **162** and the inner layer **164**. The belt elastic material may include one or more elastic elements such as strands, ribbons, or panels extending along the lengths of the elastic belts. As shown in FIGS. **2A**, **3A**, and **3B**, the belt elastic material may include a plurality of elastic strands **168** which may be referred to herein as outer, waist elastics **170** and inner, waist elastics **172**.

As shown in FIG. **2A**, the outer, waist elastics **170** extend continuously laterally between the first and second opposing end regions **106a**, **106b** and across the central region **106c** of the first elastic belt **106** and between the first and second opposing end regions **108a**, **108b** and across the central region **108c** of the second elastic belt **108**. In some embodiments, some elastic strands **168** may be configured with discontinuities in areas. For example, as shown in FIG. **2A**, the inner, waist elastics **172** extend intermittently along the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108**. More particularly, the inner, waist elastics **172** extend along the first and second opposing end regions **106a**, **106b** and partially across the central region **106c** of the first elastic belt **106**. The inner, waist elastics **172** also extend along the first and second opposing end regions **108a**, **108b** and partially across the central region **108c** of the second elastic belt **108**. As such, the inner, waist elastics **172** do not extend across the entirety of the central regions **106c**, **108c** of the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108**. Thus, some elastic strands **168** may not extend continuously through regions of the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** where the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** overlap the absorbent assembly **140**. In some embodiments, some elastic strands **168** may partially extend into regions of the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** where the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** overlap the absorbent assembly **140**. In some embodiments, some elastic strands **168** may not extend into any region of the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** where the first and second elastic belts **106**, **108** overlap the absorbent assembly **140**. It is to be appreciated that the first and/or second elastic belts **106**, **108** may be configured with various configurations of discontinuities in the outer, waist elastics **170** and/or the inner, waist elastic elastics **172**.

In some embodiments, the elastic strands **168** may be disposed at a constant interval in the longitudinal direction. In other embodiments, the elastic strands **168** may be disposed at different intervals in the longitudinal direction. As discussed in more detail below, the belt elastic strands **168**, in a stretched condition, may be interposed and joined between the uncontracted outer layer and the uncontracted inner layer. When the belt elastic material is relaxed, the belt elastic material returns to an unstretched condition and contracts the outer layer and the inner layer. The belt elastic material may provide a desired variation of contraction force in the area of the ring-like elastic belt.

In some configurations, the first elastic belt **106** and/or second elastic belt **108** may define curved contours, such as shown in FIG. **2A**. For example, the inner lateral edge **107b** of the first elastic belt **106** may include curved portions in the first and second opposing end regions **106a**, **106b**. Similarly, the inner lateral edge **109b** of the second elastic belt **108** may include curved portions in the first and second opposing end

regions **108a**, **108b**. Such curved contours may help define desired shapes to leg opening **112**, such as for example, relatively rounded leg openings. In addition to having curved contours, the elastic belts **106**, **108** may include elastic strands **168**, **172**, **173** that extend along curved paths that may correspond with the curved contours of the inner lateral edges **107b**, **109b**. As discussed below, such curved elastics **173** may be applied with the methods and apparatuses herein.

Components of the disposable absorbent article (i.e., diaper, disposable pant, adult incontinence article, sanitary napkin, pantliner, etc.) described in this specification can at least partially be comprised of bio-sourced content as described in US 2007/0219521A1 Hird et al published on Sep. 20, 2007, US 2011/0139658A1 Hird et al published on Jun. 16, 2011, US 2011/0139657A1 Hird et al published on Jun. 16, 2011, US 2011/0152812A1 Hird et al published on Jun. 23, 2011, US 2011/0139662A1 Hird et al published on Jun. 16, 2011, and US 2011/0139659A1 Hird et al published on Jun. 16, 2011. These components include, but are not limited to, top-sheet nonwovens, backsheet films, backsheet nonwovens, side panel nonwovens, barrier leg cuff nonwovens, super absorbent, nonwoven acquisition layers, core wrap nonwovens, adhesives, fastener hooks, and fastener landing zone nonwovens and film bases.

In at least one exemplary configuration, a disposable absorbent article component comprises a bio-based content value from about 10% to about 100% using ASTM D6866-10, method B, in another embodiment, from about 25% to about 75%, and in yet another embodiment, from about 50% to about 60% using ASTM D6866-10, method B.

In order to apply the methodology of ASTM D6866-10 to determine the bio-based content of any disposable absorbent article component, a representative sample of the disposable absorbent article component must be obtained for testing. In at least one embodiment, the disposable absorbent article component can be ground into particulates less than about 20 mesh using known grinding methods (e.g., Wiley® mill), and a representative sample of suitable mass taken from the randomly mixed particles.

As previously mentioned, the apparatuses and methods according to the present disclosure may be utilized to assemble elastic laminates **402** used in various components of absorbent articles, such as for example, elastic belts **106**, **108** and/or leg cuffs **156**. Although the following methods may be provided in the context of the diaper **100** shown in FIGS. **1** and **2A**, it is to be appreciated that the methods and apparatuses herein may be used to assemble various elastic laminates that can be used with various embodiments of absorbent articles, such as for example, the absorbent articles disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 7,569,039, filed on Nov. 10, 2004; U.S. Patent Publication No. 2005/0107764A1, filed on Nov. 10, 2004; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/221,127, filed on Aug. 30, 2011; and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/221,104, filed on Aug. 30, 2011, which are all hereby incorporated by reference herein. In other examples, the fluid application apparatuses and methods herein may be configured to apply adhesives to elastics and substrates to assembly elastic laminates in accordance with the methods and apparatuses disclosed in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/434,984, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,036, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,063, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,247,

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entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,503, entitled "METHODS AND APPARATUSES FOR MAKING LEG CUFFS FOR ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012, all of which are incorporated by reference herein.

FIG. 4 shows a perspective view an embodiment of an apparatus 500 for applying elastic material in a curved path to a substrate. It is to be appreciated that the elastic material may be in various forms, such as for example, elastic strands and/or ribbons. The apparatus 500 includes a slot die applicator 502, a substrate carrier 504, and one or more guides 600. The substrate carrier 504 is positioned adjacent to the slot die applicator 502 to define a nip 580 therebetween. As shown in FIG. 4, a substrate 506 and elastic material 507 are advancing in a machine direction and are partially wrapped around the substrate carrier 504. More particularly, the substrate 506 includes a first surface 508 disposed opposite a second surface 510. And the first surface 508 of the substrate 506 is disposed on an outer surface 512 of the substrate carrier 504 while the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 advances past the slot die applicator 502. In addition, elastic material 507 is positioned on the second surface 510 of the substrate 506. It is to be appreciated that the elastic material 507 may be in a stretched state when positioned on the substrate 506. As discussed in more detail below, guides 600 control a lateral or cross directional CD position of the elastic material 507 entering the nip 580, thus applying the elastic material 507 to the substrate 506 in a curved path. The second surface 510 of the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507 advance past the slot die applicator 502 and adhesive is transferred from the slot die applicator 502 onto the second surface of the substrate and the elastic material in a pattern that is substantially the same as a pattern defined on the outer surface 512 of the substrate carrier 504. As discussed in more detail below, the substrate carrier 504 may be configured in various ways to deposit fluid 530 discharged from a slot die applicator 502 onto a substrate 506 and elastic material 507 in various different patterns, such as shown for example in FIGS. 4A through 4D. And as shown in FIGS. 4A through 4D, the elastic material 507 may be positioned on the substrate 506 along a curved path. In addition, the elastic material 507 may be positioned in a stretch state when positioned on the substrate 506.

FIG. 4 shows the guides 600 schematically represented as devices that may be used to control lateral or cross directional CD positions of the elastic material 507 entering the nip 580. Each guide 600 may include a guide member 602 having a proximal end portion 604 and a distal end portion 606. The proximal end portion 604 may be operably connected with a motor 608 adapted to drive or pivot the guide member 602 back and forth in opposing directions A, B about a pivot axis 610. One or more slots or eyelets 612 may be located at the distal end portion 606 of the guide member 602. In operation, the elastic material 507 may advance in a machine direction MD through an eyelet 612 and toward the nip 580. As the elastic material 507 advances through the eyelet 612, the guide member 602 pivots about the pivot axis 610, moving the distal end portion 606 and eyelet 612 in a lateral or cross direction CD that is substantially transverse or orthogonal to the machine direction of the substrate advancing through the nip. In turn, the lateral or cross directional movement of the distal end portion 606 of the guide member 602 correspondingly changes the lateral or cross directional CD position of the elastic material 507 entering the nip 580. Thus, the elastic material 507 is applied to the substrate 506 along a curved path.

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It is to be appreciated that the guide 600 may be located in various positions relative to the nip 580. In some configurations, the guide 600 may be located relatively close to the nip 580 to provide relatively closer control of the transverse position of the elastic material 507 with respect to the substrate 506. For example, in some configurations, the distal end portion 606 and/or grooves or eyelets 612 may be positioned within two inches of the nip 580. It is also to be appreciated that various types and configurations of guides 600 can be used to deflect the elastic material 507 in the cross direction CD, such as those comprising various configurations of pivoting arms and/or reciprocating feeder heads with grooves and/or eyelets that engage and guide the elastic material into the nip 580. Examples of guide configurations that may be adapted to be used with the apparatuses and methods herein to the adjust cross directional position of the elastic material are disclosed for example in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,500,075; 5,525,175; 6,217,690; 6,284,081; 6,287,409; 6,432,242; 6,569,275; 6,585,841; 6,808,582; 7,045,031; and 7,097,725; and U.S. Patent Publication Nos. US2010/0193138A1; US2011/0036487A1; and US2012/0273129 A1.

With continued reference to FIG. 4, it is to be appreciated that the illustrated slot die applicator 502 is a generic representation of a device that is used to apply adhesive to the substrate 506. The slot die applicator may include a slot opening 514, a first lip 516, and a second lip 518. The first lip 516 may also be referred to herein as an upstream die lip, and the second lip 518 may also be referred to herein as a downstream die lip. The slot opening 514 is located between the first lip 516 and the second lip 518. Adhesive or other fluid may be discharged from the slot opening 514 onto the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 as the substrate carrier 504 advances the substrate past the first lip 516, slot opening 514, and second lip 518 of the slot die applicator 502. As discussed in more detail below, the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 are also intermittently compressed between the slot die applicator 502 and substrate carrier 504 as the substrate 506 advances past the slot die applicator 502. It is to be appreciated that various forms of slot die applicators may be used herein to apply adhesive or other fluids to an advancing substrate according to methods and apparatuses. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 7,056,386 provides a description of slot die applicators that may be used. Other examples of commercially available slot die applicators include Nordson Corporation's EP 11 Series of Slot Die Applicators and ITW Dynatec GmbH's APEX Series of Slot Die Auto Adhesive Applicators.

Various types of substrate carriers 504 may be used in accordance with the apparatuses and methods herein. For example, FIGS. 5A and 5B show an embodiment of a substrate carrier 504 configured as a roller 520 adapted to advance a substrate 506 past the slot die applicator 502. The outer surface 512 of the substrate carrier 504 shown in FIGS. 5A and 5B includes a plurality of pattern elements 522 that protrude radially outward from a base surface 524. Each pattern element 522 includes a pattern surface 526, and the radial protrusion of the pattern elements 522 from the base surface 524 define a distance, Hp, between the pattern surface 526 and the base surface 524. As shown in FIGS. 5A and 5B, the base surface 524 is configured as a continuous surface 528, and the plurality of discrete pattern elements 522 are separated from each other by the continuous surface 528. The pattern surfaces 526 in FIGS. 5A and 5B define a diamond shape. In some embodiments, the shape and size of the pattern surface 526 of each pattern element 522 may be identical or substantially identical to each other. It is to be appreciated that the number, size, and shape of some or all the pattern surfaces

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and/or pattern elements may be different. In addition, the distance, H_p , between the base surface 524 and the pattern surface 526 of the pattern element 522 may be the same or different for some or all of the pattern elements.

As discussed in more detail below, as the substrate carrier 504 advances the substrate 506 past the slot die applicator 502, fluid discharged from the slot die applicator is deposited onto the substrate in a pattern substantially matching the shapes of the pattern surfaces on the substrate carrier. For example, FIG. 5C shows an example pattern of fluid 530 deposited on a second surface 510 of a substrate 506 and elastic material 507 after being advanced past a slot die applicator while disposed on a substrate carrier having pattern elements 522 and pattern surfaces 526 similar to those shown in FIGS. 5A and 5B. As shown in FIG. 5C, the fluid 530 is deposited onto the substrate 506 and the elastic material in discrete pattern areas 532 having diamond shapes that correspond with and may mirror the shapes of the pattern surfaces 526 on the substrate carrier 504 shown in FIG. 5A.

FIGS. 6A and 6B show another embodiment of a substrate carrier 504 configured as a roller 520 adapted to advance a substrate 506 past the slot die applicator 502. The substrate carrier 504 shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B includes a single pattern element 522 including a pattern surface 526. And the pattern element 522 protrudes radially outward from a plurality of base surfaces 524. More particularly, the pattern surface 526 is configured as a continuous surface 534 and the plurality of base surfaces are separated from each other by the pattern element 522. The radial protrusion of the pattern element 522 from the base surfaces 524 defines a distance, H_p , between the pattern surface 526 and the base surfaces 524. The pattern surface 526 in FIGS. 6A and 6B defines a continuous crossing line pattern wherein the shape and size of each base surface 524 are identical or substantially identical to each other. It is to be appreciated that the number, size, and shape of some or all the base surfaces may be different. In addition, the distance, H_p , between the base surfaces 524 and the pattern surface 526 of the pattern element 522 may be the same or different for some or all of the base surfaces. It should also be appreciated that the substrate carrier may be configured without base surfaces. For example, the substrate carrier may include a plurality of holes and the pattern surface may be configured as a continuous surface wherein the plurality of holes are separated from each other by the pattern element.

As previously mentioned, as the substrate carrier 504 advances the substrate 506 past the slot die applicator 502, fluid 530 discharged from the slot die applicator 502 is deposited onto the substrate 506 in a pattern substantially matching the shape of the pattern surface 526 on the substrate carrier 504. For example, FIG. 6C shows an example pattern of fluid 530 deposited on a second surface 510 of a substrate 506 and elastic material 507 after being advanced past a slot die applicator 502 while disposed on a substrate carrier 504 having a pattern element 522 and pattern surface 526 similar to that shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B. As shown in FIG. 6C, the fluid 530 is deposited onto the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507 in a crossing line pattern defining diamond shapes therebetween that correspond with and may mirror the shapes of the base surfaces 524 on the substrate carrier 504 shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B.

As previously mentioned, the substrate carrier may be constructed in various ways such that the base surface and/or pattern elements may include compliant materials. In some configurations, the compliant material(s) may be compressible to allow a pattern surface of a pattern element to deflect away from the slot die applicator. Thus, the substrate carrier may be configured such that deflection of the pattern surface

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away from the slot die applicator compresses the pattern element and/or base surface as the substrate, elastic material, and pattern element advance past the first lip, the slot opening, and the second lip of the slot die applicator.

FIG. 7 shows a schematic cross-sectional side view of an example substrate carrier 504 that may be configured with compliant materials and components that can be compressed and allow the pattern surface 526 to deflect in response to a force or forces, F , exerted on the pattern surface 526. The substrate carrier 504 in FIG. 7 is in the form of a roller 520 adapted to rotate around an axis of rotation 505. In operation, a force or forces, F , may be exerted on the pattern surface 526 as the substrate 506, elastic material 507, and pattern element 522 advance past the first lip 516, the slot opening 514, and the second lip 518 of the slot die applicator 502. It is to be appreciated that the substrate carrier 504 may be configured in various ways with various different components of compliant materials that allow the pattern surface 526 to deflect.

For example, FIGS. 7A1 and 7A2 show a detailed view of the substrate carrier 504 in the form of a roller 520, such as from FIG. 7, including a compliant pattern element 522 and a compliant base surface 524 connected with a base roll 560 having a non-compliant support surface 562. More particularly, the roller 520 in FIGS. 7A1 and 7A2 may include a base layer 564 of compliant material extending radially outward from the non-compliant support surface 562 to define the compliant base surface 524. In some arrangements, the base layer 564 of compliant material may be formed as a cylindrically shaped sleeve or tube 566 having an inner radial surface 568 and an outer radial surface 570. The inner radial surface 568 may surround all or a portion of the non-compliant support surface 562 of the base roll 560, and the outer radial surface 570 may define all or a portion of the base surface 524. In turn, the pattern element 522 may include a proximal end portion 572 and a distal end portion 574 that includes the pattern surface 526, wherein the proximal end portion 572 is connected with outer radial surface 570 of the base layer 564. As such, the pattern element 522 may extend radially outward from the base layer 564 of compliant material to the distal end portion 574. It is to be appreciated that the pattern element 522 may be separately connected with or integrally formed with the compliant base layer 564. FIG. 7A1 shows the pattern element 522 and base layer 564 of compliant material in an uncompressed state, wherein the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant support surface 562 is defined by distance, R_1 . FIG. 7A2 shows the compliant pattern element 522 and compliant base layer 564 of FIG. 7A1 in a compressed state wherein a force or forces, F , are applied to the pattern surface 526. Because the pattern element 522 and base layer 564 are both compliant, the force or forces, F , applied to the pattern surface 526 causes the pattern element 522 and the base layer 564 to be compressed against the non-compliant surface 562 of the base roll 560. The compression of the pattern element 522 and the base layer 564 allows the pattern surface 526 to deflect in response to the forces, F . As such, the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant surface 562 is defined as distance, R_2 , wherein R_2 is less than R_1 .

In another example, FIGS. 7B1 and 7B2 show a detailed view of the substrate carrier 504 in the form of a roller 520, such as from FIG. 7, including a non-compliant pattern element 522 and a compliant base surface 524 connected with a base roll 560 having a non-compliant support surface 562. More particularly, the roller 520 in FIGS. 7B1 and 7B2 may include a base layer 564 of compliant material extending radially outward from the non-compliant support surface 562 to define the compliant base surface 524. In some arrange-

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ments, the base layer 564 of compliant material may be formed as a cylindrically shaped sleeve or tube 566 having an inner radial surface 568 and an outer radial surface 570. The inner radial surface 568 may surround all or a portion of the non-compliant support surface 562 of the base roll 560, and the outer radial surface 570 may define all or a portion of the base surface 524. In turn, the pattern element 522 may include a proximal end portion 572 and a distal end portion 574 that includes the pattern surface 526, wherein the proximal end portion 572 is connected with outer radial surface 570 of the base layer 564. As such, the pattern element 522 may extend radially outward from the base layer 564 of compliant material to the distal end portion 574. It is to be appreciated that the pattern element 522 may be separately connected with or integrally formed with the compliant base layer 564. FIG. 7B1 shows the base layer 564 of compliant material in an uncompressed state, wherein the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant support surface 562 is defined by distance, R1. FIG. 7B2 shows the compliant base layer 564 of FIG. 7B1 in a compressed state wherein a force or forces, F, are applied to the pattern surface 526. Because the pattern element 522 is non-compliant and the base layer 564 is compliant, the force or forces, F, applied to the pattern surface 526 causes the pattern element 522 to push against the base layer 564 such that the base layer 564 is compressed between the pattern element 522 and the non-compliant surface 562 of the base roll 560. The compression of the base layer 564 allows the pattern surface 526 to deflect in response to the force or forces, F. As such, the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant surface 562 is defined as distance, R2, wherein R2 is less than R1.

In yet another example, FIGS. 7C1 and 7C2 show a detailed view of the substrate carrier 504 in the form of a roller 520 from FIG. 7 including a compliant pattern element 522 connected with a base roll 560. The base roll 560 includes a non-compliant outer circumferential support surface 562 that also defines the base surface 524. In turn, the pattern element 522 may include a proximal end portion 572 and a distal end portion 574 that includes the pattern surface 526, wherein the proximal end portion 572 is connected with non-compliant support surface 562. FIG. 7C1 shows the pattern element 522 in an uncompressed state, wherein the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant support surface 562 is defined by distance, R1. FIG. 7C2 shows the pattern element 522 of FIG. 7C1 in a compressed state wherein a force or forces, F, are applied to the pattern surface 526. Because the pattern element 522 is compliant, the force or forces, F, applied to the pattern surface 526 causes the pattern element 522 to be compressed against the non-compliant support surface 562 of the base roll 560. The compression of the pattern element 522 allows the pattern surface 526 to deflect in response to the force or forces, F. As such, the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant support surface 562 is defined as distance, R2, wherein R2 is less than R1. In some instances, the force or forces, F, may be exerted in a radial direction toward the axis of rotation 505.

As previously mentioned, the methods and apparatuses herein include a substrate carrier adapted to advance a substrate and elastic material past a slot die applicator while applying the elastic material to the substrate along a curved path. FIG. 8 shows a schematic cross-sectional side view of an embodiment of an apparatus 500 for creating an elastic laminate by applying elastic material 507 in a curved path to a substrate 506 including a substrate carrier 504, a slot die applicator 502, and guides 600. The substrate 506 includes a

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first surface 508 and a second surface 510 disposed opposite the first surface 508. A portion of the first surface 508 of the substrate 506 is disposed on the substrate carrier 504, which may be configured as a roller 520 having a plurality of pattern elements 522 protruding from a plurality of base surfaces 524. Advancing elastic material 507 is also positioned on the second surface 510 of the substrate 506. It is to be appreciated that the substrate carrier 504 shown in FIG. 8 may be configured with various features and aspects of any substrate carriers discussed herein, including those discussed above with reference to FIGS. 4 through 7C2. The roller 520 rotates to advance the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 past the slot die applicator 502. It is also to be appreciated that the substrate carrier 504 may be configured to advance the substrate 506 at a faster speed than the elastic material 507 upstream of the substrate carrier 504. As such, the elastic material 507 may be stretched while being positioned on the substrate 506. For example, with reference to FIG. 8, the roller 520 may be configured to advance the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 past the slot die applicator 502 at a speed of V1. And the elastic material 507 upstream of the slot die applicator 502 is advancing at a speed V2, wherein V1 is greater than V2. Thus, the elastic material 507 may be stretched while being positioned on the second surface 510 of the substrate 506.

A fluid delivery system 538 may be used to supply fluid 530, such as an adhesive, to the slot die applicator 502. It is to be appreciated that the fluid delivery system may be configured in various different ways. For example, as shown in FIG. 8, the fluid delivery system 538 may include a pump 540 to move fluid from a tank 542 to the slot die applicator 502. The fluid delivery system 538 may also be configured with a pressure relief valve 544 configured to help control the pressure of the fluid 530 fed from the pump 540. Fluid 530 from the fluid delivery system 538 passes through the slot die applicator 502 and slot opening 514 and is transferred to the second surface 510 of the advancing substrate 506 and elastic material 507.

With continued reference to FIG. 8, fluid 530 passing from the slot die applicator 502 is transferred to the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507 in a pattern or shape that is substantially the same as the pattern surfaces 526 on the substrate carrier 504. As discussed in more detail below, the substrate carrier 504 is positioned adjacent the slot die applicator 502 to define a nip 580 between the substrate carrier 504 and the slot die applicator 502. The nip 580 may be defined by a minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and slot die applicator 502, which is less than the sum of the maximum thickness of the elastic material 507 and the unconstrained caliper of the substrate 506. In some configurations, the minimum distance between the pattern surface 526 and slot die applicator 502 may be less than the unconstrained caliper of the substrate 506. As such, the pattern element and/or base surface may be compressed to allow the pattern surface 526 of the pattern element to deflect away from the slot die applicator 502 as the substrate 506, elastic material 507, and pattern surface 526 of the pattern element 522 advance past the first lip 516, the slot opening 514, and the second lip 518 of the slot die applicator 502. However, the minimum distance between the base surface 524 of the substrate carrier 504 and the slot die applicator 502 is greater than the sum of the maximum thickness of the elastic material 507 and the unconstrained caliper of the substrate 506. As such, the base surface 524 is not compressed as the substrate and elastic material advances past the first lip 516, the slot opening 514, and the second lip 518 of the slot die applicator 502. Thus, in operation, although fluid 530 is

continuously discharged from the slot die applicator 502, fluid 530 is transferred to the advancing substrate 506 and elastic material 507 when the pattern element 522 and/or base surface 524 is compressed as pattern surfaces 526 on the substrate carrier 502 advance past the slot die opening 514 and deflect the pattern surface 526. And fluid 530 is not transferred to the advancing substrate 506 and elastic material 507 when the pattern element 522 and/or base surface 524 are uncompressed while the base surfaces 524 on the substrate carrier 504 advance past the slot die opening 514.

As mentioned above, the apparatus includes one or more guides 600 to control lateral or cross directional CD positions of the elastic material 507 entering the nip 580. As shown in FIGS. 8-8A, each guide 600 includes a guide member 602 having a proximal end portion 604 operatively connected with a motor 608, and a distal end portion 606 including slots or eyelets 612. The motor 608 is adapted to drive, move, and/or pivot the guide member 602 back and forth in opposing directions A, B about a pivot axis 610. As the elastic material 507 advances in a machine direction MD through the eyelets 612 and toward the nip 580, the motor 608 pivots the guide member 602 about the pivot axis 610 to move the distal end portion 606 and eyelet 612 in a substantially lateral or cross direction CD. The lateral or cross directional movement of the distal end portion 606 of the guide member 602 correspondingly changes the lateral or cross directional CD position of the elastic material 507 entering the nip 580. Thus, the elastic material 507 is applied to the substrate 506 along a curved path as shown for example in FIG. 8B. As shown in FIG. 8B, adhesive 530 may be applied to the substrate 506 and elastics material in discrete pattern areas 532.

As shown in FIG. 8, the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 may advance from the nip 580 to be combined with a second substrate 506a to form an elastic laminate 402. More particularly, the second substrate 506a includes a first surface 508a disposed opposite a second surface 510a. The second substrate 506a advances to a press roller 509 adapted to rotate around an axis of rotation 511 such that the first surface 508a is in contact with an outer surface 513 of the press roller 509. And the second substrate 506a advances on the press roller 509 such that the second surface 510a is placed in contact with and adhered with the elastic material 507 and the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 to form elastic laminate 402, such as shown for example in FIG. 8C.

As mentioned above, the method and apparatuses herein may be used to apply elastic material 507 in a curved path to substrates 506 to make elastic laminates. It is to be appreciated that the elastic laminates may be made in various ways and may be further modified for incorporation into various types of articles. For example, FIGS. 8 through 8C show examples of how the methods and apparatuses herein may be used to make elastic laminates for use in absorbent articles. More particularly, FIGS. 8 through 8C are described below in the context of making elastic laminates in the form of belt materials 402 that may be used in the assembly of the elastic belts 106, 108 described above with reference to FIGS. 1 through 3B.

As shown in FIGS. 8-8C, a first continuous substrate layer in the form of a continuous length of outer layer belt material 162; a second continuous substrate layer in the form of a continuous length of inner layer belt material 164; and elastics 168 are combined to form a continuous elastic laminate in the form of a belt material 402. The elastics 168 shown in FIGS. 8-8C may be in the form of outer elastic strands 170 and inner elastic strands 172. Some of the inner elastic strands 172 may be elastic strands 173 that are applied between the inner and outer belt material 162, 164 along a curved path. As

discussed below, an elastic material application apparatus 500, which includes a slot die applicator 502, substrate carrier 504, and one or more guides 600 may be used to apply the elastics 173 in a curved path as discussed above with reference to the substrates 506, 506a and elastic material 507.

With continued reference to FIGS. 8 and 8A, the continuous length of outer layer belt material 162 is advanced in a machine direction onto a substrate carrier 504, which is depicted as a roller 520. Stretched elastic strands 173 advance in a machine direction MD along guides 600 that change the lateral or cross directional CD position of the elastic material 173 entering the nip 580 to be combined with the second surface 510 of the outer belt material 162. The combined outer layer belt material 162 and elastic strands 173 advance on the rotating roller 520 past a slot die applicator 502. In turn, the slot die applicator 502 applies adhesive to the outer layer belt material 162 and elastic strands 173, such as described above with reference to FIGS. 4-8 and as shown in FIG. 8B. Referring back to FIG. 8, the outer belt material 162 and elastics 173 advance from the nip 580 in a machine direction and are combined with a continuous inner layer belt material 164 between roller 520 and press roller 509 to form a continuous length of belt material 402, such as shown in FIG. 8C. The belt material 402 shown in FIG. 8C also illustrates stretched outer elastic strands 170 and inner elastic strands 172 combined with the outer layer belt material 162 and inner layer belt material 164. It is to be appreciated that the apparatus 500 may be configured to apply adhesive in various ways to the elastic strands 170, 172 as well as either or both of the continuous lengths of outer layer belt material 162 and inner layer belt material 164 at, upstream, or downstream of nip 580. For example, adhesive 530 may be applied continuously along the lengths of outer layer belt material 162 and outer elastic strands 170, and adhesive may be applied intermittently along the lengths of the inner elastic strands 172 and/or intermittently along the continuous length of outer layer belt material 162.

As shown in FIG. 8C, the inner elastic strands 172, 173 are intermittently bonded to either or both of the continuous lengths of outer layer belt material 162 and inner layer belt material 164 along the machine direction MD. More particularly, as shown in FIG. 8C, the belt material 402 may include non-bonded regions 403 intermittently spaced between bonded regions 405 along the machine direction MD. Thus, the inner elastic strands 172, 173 are not bonded to either the outer layer belt material 162 or inner layer belt material 164 in the non-bonded regions 403. And the inner elastic strands 172, 173 are bonded to the outer layer belt material 162 and/or inner layer belt material 164 in the bonded regions 405. For the purposes of clarity, dashed lines 401 are shown in FIG. 8C to represent example boundaries between the non-bonded regions 403 and the bonded regions 405. It is to be appreciated that such boundaries between the non-bonded regions 403 and the bonded regions 405 can also be curved, angled, and/or straight. Although the inner elastic strands 172, 173 are not bonded to either the outer layer belt material 162 or inner layer belt material 164 in the non-bonded regions 403, adhesive 530 may be applied in areas between the individual inner elastic strands 172 to bond the outer layer belt material 162 and inner layer belt material 164 together in the non-bonded regions 403. It should also be appreciated various numbers of elastics 170, 172, 173 can be used.

In some converting configurations, the elastic laminate 402 may be subjected to various additional operations, such as described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/434,984, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; U.S.

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patent application Ser. No. 13/435,036, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,063, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,247, entitled "APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR MAKING ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012; and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/435,503, entitled "METHODS AND APPARATUSES FOR MAKING LEG CUFFS FOR ABSORBENT ARTICLES", filed on Mar. 30, 2012, all of which are incorporated by reference herein. For example, a cutting unit may intermittently deactivate the elastics 172, 173 in by severing, cutting, and/or breaking the inner elastics 172, 173 in the non-bonded regions 403. As such, severed ends of the inner elastics 172, 173 may retract or snap back to the bonded regions 405.

Although FIGS. 8 and 8C show a configuration wherein the belt material 402 is formed by combining continuous lengths of outer layer belt material 162 and inner layer belt material 164 with elastic strands 168, it is to be appreciated the belt material 402 can be formed in various other ways. For example, the belt material 402 may be formed by a folding portion of a single continuous substrate onto another portion of the single continuous substrate.

A more detailed description of fluid transfer from the slot die applicator 502 to the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 is provided with reference to FIGS. 9A through 9E. FIG. 9A is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier of FIG. 8 shown without the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 wherein the pattern surface 526 of a pattern element 522 is adjacent a first lip 516, a second lip 518, and slot opening 514 of the slot die applicator 502. As shown in FIG. 9A, the substrate carrier 504 includes a non-compliant support surface 562, a base surface 524, and a pattern element 522 protruding from base surface 524. In an uncompressed state, the pattern element 522 protrudes outward from the base surface 524 to define a distance, H_p , between the pattern surface 526 and the base surface 524, and to define a minimum distance, R_1 , between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant support surface 562. The substrate carrier 504 is also positioned adjacent the slot die applicator 502 to define a nip 580, which is defined by a minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface 526 of the uncompressed pattern element 522 and the first lip 516 and the second lip 518. As discussed below, the minimum distance, H_g , is less than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate 506 and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507 advanced by the substrate carrier 504. In addition, the substrate carrier 504 is positioned adjacent the slot die applicator 502 to define a minimum distance, H_b , between the base surface 524 and the first lip 516 and the second lip 518. As discussed below, the minimum distance, H_b , may be greater than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate 506 and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507 advanced by the substrate carrier 504.

FIG. 9B is a detailed cross-sectional view of a substrate carrier 504 of FIG. 9A and a substrate 506 and elastic material 507 advancing past a slot die applicator 502. The substrate 506 has an unconstrained caliper, H_s , and has a first surface 508 disposed opposite of a second surface 510. An elastic material 507 is positioned on the second surface 510 of the substrate 506. The first surface 508 of the substrate 506 is disposed on the substrate carrier 504. And the substrate 506, elastic material 507, and substrate carrier 504 are shown as advancing together in a machine direction, MD, past the slot die applicator 502. More particularly, the second surface 510

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of the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507 are advancing past a slot opening 514 located between an upstream lip 516 and a downstream lip 518 of the slot die applicator 502. As previously mentioned, the substrate carrier 504 is positioned adjacent the slot die applicator 502 to define a minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface 526 of the uncompressed pattern element 522 and the first lip 516 and the second lip 518 that is less than the sum of the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507 and the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate 506. In addition, the substrate carrier 504 is positioned adjacent the slot die applicator 502 to define a minimum distance, H_b , between the base surface 524 and the first lip 516 and the second lip 518 that is greater than the sum of the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507 and unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate 506. The apparatus 500 may also be configured such that a sum of the distance, H_p , and distance, H_g , is greater than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate 506 and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507. Thus, a portion 506a, 507a of the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507 that is located between the slot opening 514 of the slot die applicator 502 and the advancing base surface 524 is not pressed against the base surface 524. As such, although fluid 530 is continuously discharged from the slot opening 514, fluid 530 is not being transferred to the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507.

FIG. 9C is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier 504, substrate 506, and elastic material 507 of FIG. 9B wherein the base surface 524 has advanced past the slot opening 514 of the slot die applicator 502 such that a portion 506b, 507b of the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 is between the first lip 516 of the slot die applicator 502 and a leading edge 546 of an advancing pattern surface 526. As previously discussed, the minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface 526 of the uncompressed pattern element 522 and the first lip 516 and the second lip 518 is less than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate 506 and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507. As such, a portion 506b, 507b of substrate 506 and the elastic material 507b between the pattern surface 526 and the first lip 516 is pressed against and exerts forces on the pattern surface 526. Thus, the pattern element 522 and/or base surface 524 compresses, allowing the pattern surface 526 to deflect away from the first lip 516 to define a minimum distance, R_2 , between the pattern surface 526 and the non-compliant support surface 562. The fluid 530 being discharged from the slot opening 514 is shown in FIG. 9C as beginning to transfer to the second surface 510 of the substrate and the elastic material 507 as the leading edge 546 of the pattern surface 526 and adjacent portion of the substrate 506 begin to advance past the slot opening 514.

With continued reference to FIG. 9C, the compression of the pattern element 522 and/or base surface 524 allows the pattern surface 526 to deflect away from the first lip 516 to define a compressed distance, H_c , between the pattern surface 526 and the first lip 516. When the substrate 506 is made from a material, such as a film, the substrate 506 may maintain a caliper that is substantially the same as the unconstrained caliper, H_s , while advancing between the pattern surface 526 and the first lip 516. Thus, the pattern surface 526 may deflect by a distance represented by the difference of H_g and the sum of H_s and E_t , and in some instances, the distance R_2 , may be calculated as:

$$R_2 = R_1 + H_g - H_s - E_t$$

In such a scenario, the compressed distance, H_c , may also be equal to or substantially equal to the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material.

Still referring to FIG. 9C, when the substrate **506** is made from a material, such as a nonwoven or laminate including a nonwoven layer, the substrate **506** may be compressed to a caliper that is less than the unconstrained caliper, H_s , while advancing between the pattern surface **526** and the first lip **516**. In such a scenario, the compressed distance, H_c , may be less than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material. In other words, the substrate **506** may be compressed to a caliper that is less than the compressed distance, H_c . Thus, the pattern surface **526** may deflect by a distance represented by the difference of H_g and H_c , and in some instances, the distance R_2 , may be calculated as:

$$R_2 = R_1 + H_g - H_c$$

In some instances, the elastic material **507** may define a cross directional width dimension that is less than the pattern surface **526**. As such, pattern surface **526** may deflect by different distances when advancing past the slot die applicator **502**. For example, FIG. 9CC1 shows a cross sectional view of the pattern element **522** of FIG. 9C wherein the pattern surface is deflected by different distances, wherein the elastic material **507** is in the form of an elastic strand **507a**. As shown in FIG. 9CC1, the location where both the advancing elastic strand **507** and substrate **506** are between slot die applicator **502** and the pattern element **522**, a first portion **526a** of the pattern surface **526** is deflected away from the first lip **516** to define a minimum distance, R_2 , between the pattern surface **526** and the non-compliant support surface **562**, wherein R_2 may be calculated as described above. In addition, the location where only the advancing substrate **506** is between slot die applicator **502** and the pattern element **522**, a second portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** is deflected away from the first lip **516** to define a distance, R_3 , between the pattern surface **526** and the non-compliant support surface **562**, wherein R_3 is greater than R_2 and less than R_1 .

As such, when the substrate **506** is made from a material, such as a film, the substrate **506** may maintain a caliper that is substantially the same as the unconstrained caliper, H_s , while advancing between the pattern surface **526** and the first lip **516**. Thus, the second portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** may deflect by a distance represented by the difference of H_g and H_s , and in some instances, the distance R_3 , may be calculated as:

$$R_3 = R_1 + H_g - H_s$$

With continued reference to FIG. 9CC1, when the substrate **506** is made from a material, such as a nonwoven or laminate including a nonwoven layer, the substrate **506** may be compressed to a caliper that is less than the unconstrained caliper, H_s , while advancing between the pattern surface **526** and the first lip **516**. Thus, the second portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** may deflect by a distance represented by:

$$R_3 < R_1 + H_g - H_s$$

As previously mentioned, the elastic material **507** may be in various forms, such as for example, elastic strands, ribbons, and/or panels. For example, similar to FIG. 9CC1, FIG. 9CC2 shows a cross sectional view of the pattern element **522** of FIG. 9C wherein the pattern surface is deflected by different distances reflected by R_2 and R_3 , wherein the elastic material **507** is in the form of an elastic ribbon **507b**.

FIG. 9D is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier **504** and substrate of FIG. 9C wherein the base surface **524** and leading edge **546** of the pattern surface **526** has advanced past the slot opening **514** of the slot die applicator **502** such that the portion **506b**, **507b** of the advancing substrate **506** and elastic material **507** is between the slot opening **514** of the slot die applicator **502** and an advancing pattern surface **526**. Because the minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface **526** of the uncompressed pattern element **522** and the first lip **516** and the second lip **518** is less than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate **506** and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material **507**, the portion **506b**, **507b** of substrate **506** and elastic material **507** between the pattern surface **526** and the first lip **516** and second lip **518** of the slot die applicator **502** presses against and exerts forces on the pattern surface **526**. As such, the compliant pattern element **522** and/or base surface **524** are compressed, allowing the pattern surface **526** to deflect away from the first lip **516** and second lip **518**, as discussed above with reference to the distance R_2 . The fluid **530** being discharged from the slot opening **514** is shown in FIG. 9D as being transferred to the second surface **510** of the substrate **506** and the elastic material **507** as the pattern surface **526** and adjacent portion **506b**, **507b** of the substrate **506** and the elastic material **507** advance past the slot opening **514**.

FIG. 9E is a detailed cross-sectional view of the substrate carrier **504**, substrate **506**, and elastic material **507** of FIG. 6D wherein the portion **506b**, **507b** of the substrate **506**, the elastic material **507**, and the pattern surface **526** have advanced past the slot opening **514** of the slot die applicator **502**. As shown in FIG. 9E, an upstream portion **526a** of the pattern surface **526** is adjacent the second lip **518**, and a downstream portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** has advanced past the second lip **518**. As such, the portion **506b**, **507b** of the advancing substrate **506** and elastic material **507** between the second lip **518** of the slot die applicator **502** and the upstream portion **526a** of the advancing pattern surface **526** presses against and exerts forces on the pattern surface **526**. As such, the compliant pattern element **522** and/or base surface **524** are compressed, allowing the upstream portion **526a** of the pattern surface **526** to deflect away from the first lip **516** and second lip **518** to define the minimum distance, R_2 , between the upstream portion **526a** of the pattern surface **526** and the non-compliant support surface **562**.

With continued reference to FIG. 9E, the downstream portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** has advanced past the second lip **518** of the slot die applicator **502**, and as such, the portion **506b**, **507b** of the substrate **506** and elastic material **507** is no longer pressing against downstream portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526**, allowing the compliant pattern element **522** and/or base surface **524** to return to an uncompressed state wherein the downstream portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** deflects back away from the non-compliant surface **562** such that the minimum distance between the non-compliant surface **562** and the downstream portion **526b** pattern surface **526** is the distance, R_1 . Once the upstream portion **526a** of the pattern surface **526** has also advanced past the second lip **518**, the remainder of the compliant pattern element **522** and/or base surface **524** may return to an uncompressed state wherein the both the upstream portion **526a** and downstream portion **526b** of the pattern surface **526** have deflected away from the non-compliant surface **562** such that the minimum distance between the non-compliant surface **562** and the pattern surface **526** is the distance, R_1 .

Still referring to FIG. 9E, an uncompressed portion **506c**, **507c** of the advancing substrate **506** and the elastic material **507** is between the slot opening **514** of the slot die applicator

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502 and an advancing base surface 524. Because the minimum distance, H_b , between the base surface 524 and the first lip 516 and the second lip 518 that is greater than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material 507, a portion 506c, 507c of substrate 506 and elastic material 507 that advances between the base surface 524, slot opening 514, and the first lip 516 of the slot die applicator 502 is uncompressed. As such, the fluid 530 being discharged from the slot opening 514 is shown in FIG. 9E as ceasing to be transferred to the second surface 510 of the substrate 506 and the elastic material 507 as the base surface 524 and adjacent uncompressed portion 506c, 507c of the substrate 506 and elastic material 507 advance past the slot opening 514.

The dimensions and values disclosed herein are not to be understood as being strictly limited to the exact numerical values recited. Instead, unless otherwise specified, each such dimension is intended to mean both the recited value and a functionally equivalent range surrounding that value. For example, a dimension disclosed as "40 mm" is intended to mean "about 40 mm."

Every document cited herein, including any cross referenced or related patent or application, is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety unless expressly excluded or otherwise limited. The citation of any document is not an admission that it is prior art with respect to any invention disclosed or claimed herein or that it alone, or in any combination with any other reference or references, teaches, suggests or discloses any such invention. Further, to the extent that any meaning or definition of a term in this document conflicts with any meaning or definition of the same term in a document incorporated by reference, the meaning or definition assigned to that term in this document shall govern.

While particular embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated and described, it would be obvious to those skilled in the art that various other changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is therefore intended to cover in the appended claims all such changes and modifications that are within the scope of this invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for applying an elastic material along a curved path to a substrate, the method comprising the steps of:

advancing a substrate to a substrate carrier, the substrate having a first surface disposed opposite of a second surface;

engaging the first surface of the substrate with the substrate carrier, the substrate carrier comprising: a non-compliant support surface and a pattern element, the pattern element including a pattern surface, the substrate carrier positioned adjacent a slot die applicator to define a nip between the pattern surface of the pattern element and the slot die applicator;

positioning an elastic material on the second surface of the substrate;

advancing the second surface of the substrate and the elastic material in a machine direction through the nip while moving the elastic material in a cross direction substantially transverse to the machine direction; and

intermittently deflecting the pattern surface toward the non-compliant support surface by advancing the substrate and the elastic material through the nip.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of discharging adhesive from a slot opening of the slot die applicator onto the elastic material and the second surface of the substrate.

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3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of adhering a second substrate to the elastic material and the second surface of the substrate.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the substrate has an unconstrained caliper, H_s , and wherein the elastic material has a maximum thickness, E_t , and wherein the nip is defined by a minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface and the slot die applicator, that is less than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of deflecting the elastic material in the cross direction with a guide before entering the nip.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of pivoting the guide.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the substrate carrier comprises a roller.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the elastic material comprises an elastic strand.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the substrate comprises a nonwoven.

10. A method for applying an elastic material along a curved path to a substrate, the method comprising the steps of:

advancing a substrate to a substrate carrier, the substrate having a first surface disposed opposite of a second surface;

engaging the first surface of the substrate with the substrate carrier, the substrate carrier comprising: a pattern element including a pattern surface, wherein the substrate carrier is positioned adjacent a slot die applicator to define a nip between the pattern surface of the pattern element and the slot die applicator;

advancing an elastic material in a machine direction through the nip;

deflecting the elastic material in a cross direction substantially transverse to the machine direction while the elastic material is advancing through the nip;

positioning the elastic material on the second surface of the substrate;

discharging adhesive from the slot die applicator onto the second surface of the substrate and the elastic material while advancing through the nip; and

intermittently deflecting the pattern surface away from slot die applicator by advancing the substrate and the elastic material through the nip.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of adhering a second substrate to the elastic material and the second surface of the substrate.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the substrate has an unconstrained caliper, H_s , and wherein the elastic material has a maximum thickness, E_t , and wherein the nip is defined by a minimum distance, H_g , between the pattern surface and the slot die applicator, that is less than the sum of the unconstrained caliper, H_s , of the substrate and the maximum thickness, E_t , of the elastic material.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of deflecting further comprises moving a guide in the cross direction.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the substrate carrier comprises a roller.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein the elastic material comprises an elastic strand.

16. The method of claim 10, wherein the substrate comprises a nonwoven.

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